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ABSTRACT

The Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project (LASP) is a statewide network of schools that are changing from the traditional mode of schooling for at-risk students, which stresses remediation, to one of acceleration, which stresses accelerated learning for all students. The accelerated schools process provides a systematic approach to the restructuring of schools that serve predominantly at-risk students. This first-year evaluation report examines the progress made by eight elementary schools who joined the LASP in 1991. Data were obtained from interviews with teachers and administrators. Following the introduction, section 2 describes the project's major milestones, focusing on the primary tasks of the project teams. Section 3 describes the status of the eight schools, focusing on the major accomplishments for each school: taking stock; developing a vision; and identifying major challenges. Section 4 examines the interview findings to assess the schools' capacity-building processes and offers evidence that the three principles of accelerated schools--unity of purpose, empowerment with responsibility, and building on strengths--are taking hold. The final section offers recommendations for the introduction of new schools and continuing assistance to second-year participants. One figure is included. The appendix includes the interview guide. (Contains 17 references.) (LMI)

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THE LOUISIANA ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROJECT FIRST YEAR EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared By

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University of New orleans
New Orleans, LA

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Executive Summary

The accelerated schools process provides a systematic approach to the restructuring of schools that serve predominantly at-risk students. This first year of the Louisiana Accelerated School Project focused on building the capacity of eight schools to engage in the accelerated schools restructuring process. This first-year evaluation report summarizes and assesses program regarding three aspects of the process.

Project Milestones. There were four major projects and activities in the first year during the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project:

- Selection of Schools: Eight schools (Central Elementary, Cox Elementary, J.W. Faulk Elementary, Fifth Ward Elementary, Luling Elementary, Ryan Elementary, McDonogh 24, and Shady Grove Elementary) were selected for the project based on a systematic review of twenty schools nominated by Parish offices;
- Summer Training: A summer training program was designed and conducted to introduce teachers and administrators in the eight schools to the accelerated schools process;
- Technical Assistance: Louisiana Accelerated School Project staff provided technical assistance with the design and delivery of school-based follow-up training; and the implementation of the accelerated schools process in each school;

- Quarterly Meetings: Four quarterly meetings were conducted that provided in-depth training in taking stock and the inquiry process, two integral components of the accelerated schools process.

School Milestones: There were three major milestones for each school in the first year of the accelerated schools process. Each of the schools successfully completed:

- Taking Stock: The schools conducted in-depth studies of their own strengths and limitations. They used surveys, interviews and public meetings to gain insight into the critical issues and challenges they face.
- Develop Vision: Teachers parents, and students in each school developed a vision statement expressing their image of how they wanted their school to develop.
- Priorities for Action: Each school identified a set of priorities for future action. The schools are now engaged in a restructuring process to meet these challenges.

Building Capacity: The purpose of the initial phase of the accelerated schools process is to build school capacity. This evaluation examines evidence of the school capacity-building process in three areas:

- Unity of Purpose: Like most schools, especially schools that serve at-risk students, these schools were divided at the outset of the process. There were divisions among faculty and between their schools and their communities. There is also evidence that these

schools have used the accelerated schools process -- taking stock, developing vision, and identifying priorities -- as a means for healing divisions and creating unity.

- Empowerment with Responsibility. The concept of empowerment is often espoused in schools, but seldom realized at an "in use" level. The accelerated schools methodology couples empowerment, or involvement in decision making, with responsibility, which is the process of taking personal responsibility for school improvement. There is substantial preliminary evidence that this concept -- empowerment with responsibility -- is being field tested in the schools.
- Building on Strengths. Another critical element of the accelerated schools philosophy is the concept of building on strengths. There are a couple of indicators that schools are beginning to practice this principle: 1) all of these schools have formally celebrated becoming accelerated schools; 2) some leaders in the schools are beginning to recognize that they have strengths that can be build upon in the school change process.

Recommendations: Based on this review, the project team has developed a set of recommendations for the second year of the project. These include:

- Fall Training: Fall training for first-year schools should provide an introduction to the process, and more

intensive training in inquiry process in the second-year schools.

- Technical Assistance: Ongoing staff development is needed to continue to provide a high level and quality of service to the schools.
- Quarterly Meetings: Training on taking stock and inquiry should be the focus of quarterly meetings for first-year schools; greater emphasis on inquiry, including peer training and pilot testing, is needed for the second-year schools.
- Peer Training: More time for planning for peer training should be built into the design of quarterly meetings; follow-up technical assistance with in-school training should be provided after the quarterly meetings.
- Network Building: One of the strengths of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project is the school-to-school support that is now being provided. This network development should be actively encouraged.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project is a statewide network of schools engaged in the process of transforming from the traditional mode of schooling, which emphasizes remediation for at-risk students, to the accelerated mode of schooling, which emphasizes accelerated learning for all students. In the fall of 1991, eight schools initiated the accelerated schools process, as part of a statewide project funded by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Teams from each school participated in training in New Orleans, then organized school-based training for teachers, parents and community representatives, and finally initiated the first stage of the accelerated schools process, building capacity for school transformation.

This evaluation report examines the progress in the capacity-building process made by the eight schools in the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project. The major milestones for the initial phase of the capacity-building, the decision process, are: 1) to take stock of the school, an intensive self examination of the school by the school community; 2) to develop a vision statement from the school, which expresses type and quality of learning environment the school aspires to become; and 3) to establish priorities for the school restructuring process. In addition to documenting how the eight schools have achieved these three milestones, this evaluation report also considers the progress these school are making in building the capacity for initiating changes in curriculum, instruction, and organization,

as part of the on-going accelerated schools process. This introduction provides background on:

- Focus on At-Risk Students (Section 1.1)
- The Accelerated Schools Model (1.2)
- The Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project (1.3)
- The Evaluation Design (1.4)
- The Report Organization (1.5)

1. 1 Focus on At-Risk Students

The fact that the education reform movement of the 1980s, which emphasized excellent schools for the majority, and the equity movement are at odds is widely acknowledged (Boyd, 1989; Maeroff, 1989). In particular, the children of urban poverty have missed the benefits of the school reform movements of the 1980s. Maeroff (1989) observes: "Students in big cities suffer in ways that seem much more resistant to improvement than the educational woes of students in other settings" (p. 636). Thus the reform movement of the 1980s may well have widened the gap between the haves and the have nots.

Levin (1988a) defines these have nots, or "at-risk" students:

> "Pupils who are defined as educationally disadvantaged or at risk lack the home and community resources to fully benefit from conventional school practices. Because of poverty, cultural differences, or linguistic differences, they tend to have low academic achievement and experience high secondary school drop-out rates" (p. 1).

If at-risk students cannot benefit fully from conventional schooling, then it follows that they can hardly benefit from reforms designed to improve the conventional approach. Levin

also points out that at-risk students "...are especially concentrated among racial and ethnic minority groups, immigrants, language minorities, and economically disadvantaged populations" (1988a, p. 1), the very populations that are expected to grow as a percentage of the total population in the foreseeable future. Thus, it also follows that if schools are to serve better the growing at-risk student population, a different approach to school reform is needed: one that does not merely strengthen the tenets of conventional education -- by moving back to the basics and increasing requirements -- but that fundamentally changes the assumptions upon which schools for at-risk populations are based.

The accelerated schools movement provides a framework for such fundamental change. Levin's accelerated schools concepts change the basic premises upon which education for the disadvantaged are based. The traditional approach to educating at-risk students is to remediate, to pull students out of the classroom and give them "special" attention (Boyd, 1988a; Levin, 1988a). The results of remediation are that the students who start behind their peers, fall further behind as they progress through school and are likely to drop out before they reach the end of high school. If these students manage to complete high school, they are, on average, four years behind their more advantaged counterparts.

The accelerated schools program takes a fundamentally different approach. It emphasizes acceleration rather than remediation of the educationally at-risk student. It also

proposes a well-defined set of principles that, in combination, can fundamentally change the operation of the schools where they are implemented. Given its focus on acceleration for at-risk students, it is, perhaps, little wonder that the accelerated schools concept has gained widespread acceptance.

1.2 The Accelerated Schools Model

Levin (1988a) identifies the four factors, upon which accelerated learning depends, as: "1) capacity; 2) effort; 3) time devoted to learning; and 4) quality of learning resources" (p. 5). In the development of a model for accelerated learning for at-risk students he reviewed a variety of accelerated practices, including the Montessori approach to gifted education, and other proven techniques. Based on this review he identifies four critical factors:

> "An effective approach should focus on creating learning activities which are characterized by high expectations and high status for the participants."
>
> "A successful program should set a deadline for closing the achievement gap so that, ultimately, educationally disadvantaged children will be able to benefit from mainstream instruction."
>
> "An effective curriculum for the disadvantaged student should not only be faster paced and actively engage the interests of such children to enhance their motivation; it should include concepts, analysis, problem-solving, and interesting applications."
>
> "The design and implementation of successful educational programs to address the needs of the educationally disadvantaged will require the involvement of parents, the use of community resources, and the extensive participation of teachers in formulating the intervention that will be provided" (Levin, 1988a, excerpts from pp. 20-21).

The concept of accelerated schools for at-risk students is based on three principles (Levin, 1988a). The first, unity of purpose, "...refers to the agreement among parents, teachers and students on a common set of goals for the school that will be the focal point for everyone's efforts" (p. 22). The second, empowerment, "...refers to the ability of key participants to make important decisions at the school level and in the home to improve the education of students" (p. 22-23). The third, building on strengths, "...refers to utilizing all of the learning resources that students, parents, school staff and communities can bring to the educational endeavor" (p. 23). In combination, these assumptions provide a basis for implementing a new form of school organization.

1.3 The Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project

The Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project has a three-stage design. Based on the model developed by Henry Levin (1988a & 1988b) and our prior experience with accelerated schools in the State of Louisiana, the process of training and assisting schools with the implementation of the accelerated schools process has been structured into three phases: decision process, implementation, and impact. During 1991-92, eight schools were trained in the accelerated schools project (see figure 1). In 1992-93, seven new schools will be trained in the process. Each of these sets of schools will be provided training and technical assistance that facilitates their progress through the three phases described below.

Figure 1

Central
Shady Grove
Ryan
Fifth Ward
J. W. Faulk
McDonogh #24
Luling
Cox

1.3.1 Phase 1: Capacity Building

During the initial stage of the accelerated schools intervention, the focus of the Satellite Center's effort is on the empowerment of the entire school staff, enabling them to work together, establishing "...a vision for the school that is based upon acceleration of the progress of its students to get them into the educational mainstream by the end of grade six" (Levin, 1988b, p. 5).

During the initial phase of the project, the overall objective is to facilitate the development of the decision-making capacity in the schools, including formative evaluation processes. Of particular concern during this initial phase is the development of a baseline assessment of the schools and a school vision. After these processes are completed, the school can begin the restructuring process. In the longer term, we plan to work with the schools to develop school-based evaluations.

1.3.2 Phase 2: Implementation

The implementation phase involves school committees in the process of inquiring into the most appropriate strategies for acceleration. Our technical assistance will concentrate on three activities:

- Formal Training. Based on the assessment process, the Satellite Center staff will organize a year-two training plan. The assessment will identify specific training needs. Training will emphasize thriving in the cadre-based inquiry process, as well as other topics identified in the assessment.

- School-Based Training. Our initial experience with accelerated schools in the New Orleans area indicates that school-based cadres are likely to need special training aimed at encouraging and facilitating their inquiry process. Based on the assessment results we intend to organize a school-based training process during the second year of the project aimed at facilitating the work of the school-based cadres.

- Pilot Assessments. We anticipate that during the second year of the project, school-based cadres will be engaged in pilot testing new curriculum and new approaches to instruction. The center will work with the schools to facilitate the design and testing of the pilot projects.

1.3.3 Phase 3: School Impact

As a final outcome of the accelerated schools project: "We expect to see improvements in student achievement, attendance, participation, self-esteem, satisfaction with school, and behavior" (Levin, 1988b, pp. 7-8). During the decision-making phase of the project, it does not seem productive to focus on the evaluation of project outcomes. However, as schools are reorganized and begin to pilot test new educational strategies, we anticipate that the school will need to begin organizing data collection strategies for the formal summative evaluation.

1.4 The Evaluation Design

The evaluation component of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project has a longitudinal design that emphasizes action research. The study design is intended to provide feedback to the project team as they provide assistance to schools progressing through the three developmental stages. Both aspects of the evaluation design are described briefly below.

1.4.1 Focus on Action Research

The action research component of the project has two objectives: 1) to assist the selected schools with the development of their school-based inquiry processes; and 2) to guide our inquiry into the process of facilitating the transition of schools from a conventional mode to an accelerated mode of schooling. We believe an emphasis on action research is necessary to achieve both of these purposes because:

1. Accelerated Schools is a new concept and all parties involved in its implementation are constantly engaged in a learning process. Implementing the accelerated schools is not simply a process of replicating a model that has already been developed, but rather is a process of developing a new model of accelerated learning in each school site in which it is implemented.

2. The concept of "teacher as researcher" is integral to the successful implementation of the accelerated schools approach, since each teacher needs to engage in an inquiry process to discover the combinations of curricular and

instructional processes that are most appropriate for their students.

3. The best way for UNO to facilitate the development of accelerated schools in Louisiana is through a process of action research, a process that involves its faculty in an inquiry process that will model the types of learning that are integral to the development of accelerated schools.

This emphasis on action-oriented inquiry, both at the state-wide project level and the school level, has been integral to the design and execution of the project and of the site-based evaluations. Our action-oriented inquiry has involved system-wide observation, reflection, and action experimentation (or "pilot testing") of new strategies. Insights gained from this project-level inquiry process have been integrated into this evaluation report, as have the results of our interviews, described below, as part of the longitudinal design.

1.4.2 Longitudinal Design

In addition to using action research to support the development of the schools and, indeed, to facilitate the capacity building in the schools, a longitudinal research design was developed for the study. The three-stage research design parallels the capacity building process described above.

1.4.2.1 First-Year Interview

Site visits were conducted during the middle of the first year, when the schools were nearing completion of the taking-stock process (a systematic examination of the school's strengths

and weaknesses). The interview guide (appendix A) focused on what teachers and administrators had learned about the status of the school. The questionnaire asked about virtually every aspect of the school, including its students, organization, curriculum, and relations with the central office. The interviews, conducted with the principal and groups of five or six teachers, were intended to achieve three purposes.

First, by focusing on the status of the school, the first year interviews asked members of the school to reflect on what they had learned about their school in the taking-stock process. By answering interviewers' questions after the interviews, the research team members also provided informal feedback to the schools about the approach used for taking stock and issues discovered in the process. This process enhanced the dialogue between the university team and the members of the school community.

Second, the first-year interviews also helped the project team to establish a baseline for each school. The interview results provide in-depth insights into the status of the school during the initial stage of the process. This baseline will enhance our eventual understanding of how the nuances of the implementation process influenced changes in each school. This base will be used in future research on the project.

Third, the first-year interviews, combined with other information generated by the schools during their first year in the project, provided information for the first-year evaluation

report. Interview results have been used as a basis for this report.

The first-year interview guide will be refined and used for new schools involved in the accelerated schools process in fall 1992. Evaluative site visits to the new first-year schools will be conducted in the middle of the 1992-93 school year.

1.4.2.2 Second-Year Interviews

The second-year interviews, which will be conducted in the original eight schools toward the end of the second year of the project, will focus on how the school organization has changed as a result of the process. The second-year interview guide was developed initially for a study of schools that had undergone major improvements and has been refined in a study of first-year accelerated schools in Louisiana and Texas (Davidson, 1992). The second-year interviews, to be conducted in the initial eight schools at the end of next year, will provide information into whether each school's organization changed.

By the end of the second year, the initial eight schools in the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project will have: 1) restructured the school organization to address the school's major challenges; and 2) pilot-tested innovations intended to address these changes. The second-year interviews will collect information on the extent of change in the school organization, focusing on: relations with the central office, leadership, role of teachers, relations with parents and community, and focus of pedagogy.

1.4.2.3 Third-Year Interviews

Third-year interview procedures will be planned and pilot tested next year. One of the schools added to the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project for 1992-93, Mary D. Coghill Accelerated Elementary School, was originally introduced to the accelerated schools process in the fall of 1990, as part of the initial pilot test of the accelerated schools process at UNO. By working with Coghill next year, the UNO project team will have an opportunity to gain experience with facilitating the third year of the change process. In addition, a third-year interview guide will be developed and pilot tested at Coghill during the 1992-93 academic year.

1.4.3 Focus on Test Scores

The usual criterion for evaluating school improvement projects, test scores, is included in the ultimate, summative criteria for accelerated schools. The Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project is a three-to-five-year change process that should result in test score gains. Therefore, the research team will examine test score changes, hopefully gains, in subsequent years of the project. A design for this aspect of the longitudinal assessment of test score improvement will be developed in 1992-93.

1.5 Report Organization

In addition to the introduction, this report has four major sections. First, the major milestones of the project are

discussed in Section 2, which focuses on the major tasks of the project teams.

Second, the status of the schools is described briefly (Section 3), focusing on the accomplished major milestones for each school during the first year of the project: taking stock, developing a vision, and identifying major challenges that will be the focus of the school restructuring process. The discussion reports on whether these school milestones have been achieved.

Third, the first-year interview results are examined to assess the status of the capacity-building process (Section 4). Specifically this Section 4 considers evidence that the three principles of accelerated schools -- unity of purpose, empowerment with responsibility, and building on strengths -- are taking hold in the schools.

Finally, the recommendations are presented (Section 5). The recommendations focus on actions the project team can take to enhance the second year of the state project, both for the introduction of new schools to the accelerated schools process and the continuing assistance of second-year schools.

2.0 PROJECT MILESTONES

There were four major components of the first year of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project: selection of the schools (Section 2.1), the summer training (Section 2.2), technical assistance (Section 2.3), and quarterly meetings (Section 2.4). The discussion of each area of project activities considers both the actions taken during the year and their impact. The evidence on the impact of the project activities is derived from feedback received during or after each activity, interviews conducted during the first-year evaluation site visits, observations of the project team, and feedback from the school principals in a formal review session.

2.1 Selection of Schools

Dr. James Meza, Jr., Visiting Associate Professor in Educational Leadership at the University of New Orleans and Director of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project, and Dr. Edward St. John, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at UNO and faculty consultant on the project, collaborated on the design of the school selection process. They based their design decisions on their experience with three pilot schools during the 1990-91 academic year.

2.1.1 The Selection Process

An application to recommend a school for the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project was mailed to every superintendent in the State. The application process included: 1) a nomination by the Parish; 2) a statement about the school population; and 3) an

expression of interest in the accelerated school process. About twenty applications were received.

Drs. Meza and St. John used five criteria to guide the selection: a) serving predominantly at-risk students; b) the leadership experience and potential of the principal; c) evidence that the teachers in the school were interested in participating in the process; d) evidence of parish support for the accelerated schools concept and process; and e) overall diversity of school characteristics (e.g. urban and rural, black and white leadership, and so forth). The selection process proved quite difficult, since all of the schools nominated by their superintendents seemed very well suited for the project. Based on a review of each application, eight schools were selected, one from each Congressional district.

2.1.2 Assessment of the Process

A diverse set of schools was selected for the project. Each school exhibits initial signs that they will successfully implement the process, as discussed in section 3 and 4 of this report. Thus, the prima facie evidence suggests the selection process was successful. Based on our research and observations during the first year of the project, we have reached some further conclusions about the selection process.

First, there is excess demand for assistance with the accelerated schools process in Louisiana. Not only were several schools nominated by their parish superintendents, but there were numerous inquiries about the process. We are currently exploring

ways of expanding the project to meet some of this demand. For 1992-93 seven additional schools were selected from the first-year applicants and other schools that had expressed interest.

Second, it is important that schools go through the process of applying for inclusion in the process. Schools that formally apply have made a free and informed choice to be involved. This makes accelerated schools different from most other types of reforms, especially those that are mandated by the state or parish. Thus the accelerated schools process is viewed by teachers as an opportunity, rather than a requirement, which helps foster enthusiasm within the school.

Third, it may be desirable to provide more advanced information about accelerated schools as part of the accelerated schools process. Most of the first-year schools had some type of internal discussion of the accelerated schools process before they attended the summer training. Some of the principals had actually consulted with all of the teachers in their school before they applied. Based on our interviews, we have realized that this prior exposure is important as a means of creating an atmosphere of free and informed choice in the school. Teachers, as well as principals, need the opportunity to openly choose to participate in the process.

In recognition of the importance of this prior exposure, Dr. Meza and Dr. Levin provided an introductory meeting for the new schools at the February Quarterly meeting for principals and teachers held in Lafayette, Louisiana. Follow-up site visits

were conducted to each school to introduce teachers to the accelerated schools philosophy and process. When the first-year interviews are conducted at these schools during the 1992-93 school year, we will inquire about the advanced training.

2.2 Summer Training

A major feature of the accelerated schools process is training in the principles and processes used in accelerated schools. The training process was initially developed by a team at Stanford University. Dr. Meza originally received training at Stanford University in summer of 1990, as part of the project sponsored by the Chevron Corporation. As part of the initial Accelerated Schools Satellite Center Project, supported by Chevron, James Meza, along with other faculty at the University of New Orleans, teamed with Henry Levin and others at Stanford, to provide a training session in the fall of 1990 for three schools affiliated with the Chevron project. The other members of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project -- Dr. St. John, Ms. Allen-Haynes and Dr. Davidson -- received their initial training in the accelerated schools process as part of this fall 1990 training session. Thus all members of UNO's project team had some exposure to the training process before the state grant was awarded.

In the Spring of 1991, the University of New Orleans received a grant from the Louisiana State Board of Education through 8g. After receiving the new grant and selecting staff for the project, all members of the project team attended an

additional training session conducted by the Stanford Project Team in the summer of 1991. Dr. Meza attended a training session in Hayward, California. Dr. St. John, Ms. Allen-Haynes, and Dr. Davidson attended a training session in San Marcos, Texas. Based on their experience with both sets of training, as well as with the pilot testing of the accelerated schools process in the three schools included in 1990-91, the project team developed a design for the first-year training.

2.2.1 Summer Training Program

The summer training program for the eight first-year schools was conducted July 28-August 1, 1991 in New Orleans. Administrators and teachers from the eight schools attended.

The schedule for the training was adapted from the program used for Stanford's summer training for new schools. Dr. Henry Levin from Stanford University participated in the training and all the members of the project team contributed to the program. A training manual was prepared for each participant from training materials developed by Stanford. Permission was given to copy the manual as appropriate for training in the school when the teams returned.

Those who had attended summer training were given responsibility to work with an Accelerated Schools Specialist on the design and implementation of an in-school training session for the rest of the school. The initiation of this process, at the start of the fall semester, signaled the beginning of the technical assistance process.

2.2.2 Assessment of the Summer Training

The training was an intensive process over a five-day period. The evaluations conducted at the end of the training indicated that the training program as a whole was well regarded. The participants demonstrated a strong understanding of the principles of accelerated schools. They also indicated an understanding of the taking-stock process. However, the training material and the workshop sessions dealing with the inquiry process were cut short because of apparent burn out on the part of the participants. And the feedback after the training session indicated that some felt uncertain about the inquiry process. The project team made a commitment before the end of the training session to follow up with more training on the inquiry process.

During the evaluation site visits, the evaluation team interviewed teachers who had been to training and some who had not. The fact that only some teachers from each school had the opportunity to attend training added to inequities in every school. There was a "New Orleans" (or core) group in each school who were more highly involved in the initial part of the implementation process in each school. However, the two-stage training design -- having a group trained at New Orleans organize training for their peers when they returned -- also had some advantages that were described in the interviews. First, it encouraged those who attended training to think about what the model meant to them and their school. Second, it created a dialogue in the school about the accelerated schools philosophy

and process. In fact, it appears the two-stage process got people talking with each other who normally did not have opportunities to communicate directly with one another. This development may have helped create a foundation for building a capacity to successfully move toward the accelerated mode of schooling.

Since we observed there were inequities created by the process, we discussed alternative approaches to organizing training at the third quarterly meeting and in a subsequent planning meeting with the principals. The principals strongly recommended continuation of the summer training based on the following rationale: 1) teachers enjoyed getting away from the school because they feel more professional; and 2) the contacts with people at other schools was universally considered a valuable part of the process.

2.3 Technical Assistance

The provision of technical assistance to the schools in the network is integral to the design of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project. This aspect of the program design was integral to the relationship established between the University of New Orleans and the three pilot schools in the Chevron-funded Satellite Center Project. Based on his experience in the pilot test, Dr. Meza included two Accelerated Schools Specialist positions into the design of the state project. The maximum number of schools that could be assigned to one professional staff person was set at four, since we believed that it was

desirable to have as much as a day a week available, on the average, for direct assistance during the initial start-up process.

2.3.1 Support for Schools

Two Accelerated Schools Specialists were hired at the start of the project. Both had had prior experience with helping an accelerated school with the start-up process the prior year. Both were assigned to provide assistance to four schools. Both were assigned two schools that could be easily reached within a day and two schools that were easier to service in overnight trips. Their responsibilities fell into four general areas.

First, the Accelerated Schools Specialists collaborated with the core group from each school on the design and delivery of a school-based training for teachers and others in the school community (parents, cafeteria workers, etc.) who did not attend training in New Orleans. This process usually involved at least two days of activity in the schools, including a day for planning and a day for training. For the more distant schools, in Shreveport and Monroe, week-long trips were taken to combine a set of activities in a single trip. In contrast, there was more flexibility with the local schools, where more frequent visits were made, especially during the start-up process.

The approaches used to deliver the second stage of training process varied from school to school. In some instances, a team from New Orleans visited the school and played a major role in the training, while in others the core group of teachers who had

attended training in New Orleans provided most of the in-school training and the Accelerated Schools Specialist served as a consultant during the training process. The local school adaptation of the school-based training process seemed appropriate since there was a great diversity in the cultures of these schools.

Second, the Accelerated Schools Specialists kept in frequent contact with their four schools during the school year, to provide technical assistance with the taking-stock, vision-setting, and restructuring processes. This direct technical assistance took many forms: answering questions; participating in brainstorming sessions with school committees; coaching principals and other school leaders; providing supplemental materials on accelerated schools; and facilitating linkages with other university resources, other people in the accelerated schools movement, and other school districts and schools that could provide information and suggestions.

Providing this diverse array of ad hoc technical assistance services required a great deal of collaboration among the members of the project teams, as well as between the team members and others in the university, local schools, and the accelerated schools movement. Thus communications, sharing ideas about what was working and not working in individual schools and in different schools facing similar situations, became a critical part of the process. The Accelerated Schools Specialists became facilitators and their knowledge of the schools, the accelerated

schools process, the university, and other schools, became an essential ingredient in the facilitation process.

Third, the Accelerated Schools Specialists served as coaches to teachers and administrators in the schools. Strong bonds developed between the Specialists and the leaders in the schools they served. They gained the confidence of teachers and administrators; they were welcome in classrooms, in planning meetings, at parent/community meetings, and especially in one-on-one conversations. In these sessions they provided support, advice, and coaching. The people they worked with became the leaders in their schools -- change agents who believed they could help their schools grow and change.

Finally, the Accelerated Schools Specialists served as network builders. They got directly involved in schools helping them to plan for the quarterly meetings, encouraging a sense of pride. This support was infectious. Each school began to take great pride in sharing what it was doing with other schools in the network.

2.3.2 The Impact of Technical Assistance

This technical assistance, the range of support services provided by the Accelerated Schools Specialists and other project staff and consultants, was an essential ingredient in the capacity-building process. Each of the Specialists had her own style, but they shared a common aim of supporting the schools. The direct support helped to keep the school-based process on track and speeded capacity building.

The differences in style between the two Specialists is not only an interesting contrast, but illustrative of the range of approaches that can be used to facilitate the accelerated schools process. One of the Specialists was an energetic "front stage" player. She was directly involved in the actual delivery of training in the four schools she assisted and made a point of getting to know all (or most) of the teachers in those schools. She gave the teachers visible verbal support in front of their peers, thus encouraging the types of leadership and teaching behaviors that could eventually transform the schools. Her confidence, along with her support of others, provided a catalyst for change in the schools. During the evaluative site visits, the principals and teachers at these schools indicated that her support was essential to the building of a new attitude of hope in the schools. In the quarterly meetings, the teachers and principals from these schools often stood up and spoke to their peers about the value of the assistance they received.

The other Specialist has a shy nature and is not always comfortable being a "front stage" player. Instead she is a "back stage" player with good organizing and facilitating skills, sensitivity to others and to group processes, and an instinctive ability to anticipate and facilitate change. Her role in the site-based training was usually more modest. She played a role in the training, but she also encouraged others in the "New Orleans" (or core) groups to share what they had learned. She also spent a lot of time meeting with and talking to leaders who

emerged in the schools she assisted. The high value placed on this personal support was evident in the interviews with principals and other school leaders. It has also been evident in interactions at quarterly meeting. The bonding -- evident in the verbal and nonverbal cues that are taken and given as support -- showed a depth of communication and understanding that usually does not develop between people in so short a time.

Both approaches have worked well. The commonalities between the two approaches were: 1) both Specialists had some experience with the accelerated schools start-up process before they became Specialists; 2) both had a range of other experiences in schools and other settings that they could draw upon; 3) both built strong personal bonds of friendship with people in their schools; 4) both held and communicated their vision of the potential of accelerated schools; 5) and both were open to feedback and capable of adapting their approaches as new situations emerged. These qualities seem important to the facilitator's role. The differences in style may be a strength since different styles seem natural to different school settings.

The matching of people and schools seems to be a critical part of the technical assistance process. In the first year, Dr. Meza had some personal insights into the communities and schools that were selected for the project, based on his experience in the state. He had also worked with the two Specialists when they had volunteered in the accelerated schools the prior year. Thus he had an intuitive sense about the matching of Specialists with

their schools. A complex set of factors seems to have been at work, both in Meza's intuitive judgments about matching Specialists and schools and in the subsequent bonding process.

The personal style of the Accelerated Schools Specialist and organizational culture of the school need to fit for the potential of the technical assistance process to work well. Louisiana has a mixture of cultural aspects: black and white, urban and rural, north Louisiana and south Louisiana. Schools also have different cultures that reflect their micro cultures. Schools that are a few blocks apart in an urban neighborhood -- in New Orleans, Lafayette, Shreveport, or any other urban center in the State -- can have vastly different school histories and cultures. These nuances and differences need to be appreciated by Accelerated Schools Specialists for the technical assistance process to work effectively.

Interestingly, these are not simply issues of ethnic fit. One Specialist was black, the other white. Both worked in schools with white principals and in schools with black principals. But the styles of the Specialists fit well with the schools they served. As the project expands, this appreciation for diversity of school contexts, needs to evolve so that the uniqueness of individual schools -- the strengths on which they need to build -- can be built upon.

2.4 Quarterly Meetings

Another distinctive feature of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project was the provision of quarterly meetings as part

of the basic design. The decision to include quarterly meetings in the project was based on a judgment that it seemed like a good organizational strategy for providing on-going training. However, since neither UNO nor any of the other accelerated schools centers across the country had previously used quarterly meetings as an organizing strategy, the full benefits of the strategy were not known before the process was initiated.

2.4.1 A Training Strategy

Even before the summer training, the members of the project team were aware that the content of the accelerated schools training was too extensive to absorb in a one-week session. Each of us had observed and experienced this content and process overload when we were participants in training in San Marcos and Hayward. It was also evident that there was an overload at the New Orleans training session. In particular we were aware that the complexities of taking stock and facilitating school-based inquiry were not fully understood by participants in any of the training sessions we had attended, including UNO's summer training. Therefore, before the first quarterly meeting the staff realized that content would need to be covered again.

The quarterly reports served two purposes -- they created a structure for routine reporting that kept the project moving within the schools; and they provided an opportunity for the schools to communicate with each other. Initially, most of the school reports were given by the principals. However, by the third quarterly meeting, most of the reports were given by

teachers, which suggests a growing sense of teacher empowerment in the schools.

There had been three quarterly meetings at the time this report was initially written. The commonalities of the design of the three meetings were: 1) each school prepared and presented a quarterly report; 2) someone from the national accelerated schools network was invited to give a presentation on an aspect of the accelerated schools process; and 3) the project staff facilitated a reflective dialogue among the schools about the implementation process.

The presentations at the quarterly meetings by representative from the national network were critical to the first-year success of the project. At the first quarterly meeting, Suzanne Stills, an accelerated schools trainer at Texas A&M University and the former principal of Hollibrook School, a model accelerated school, gave a presentation on what it took to really take stock in the school. Her presentation sent a shock wave through the session -- everyone realized that they had not yet gotten into enough depth about their school. The fact that Ms. Stills had actually been through the process and could tell stories about what her school had done helped to motivate all who were present.

At the second quarterly meeting, Dr. Jane McCarthy, an Associate Professor at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and former Associate Director of the National Accelerated Schools Network, gave a presentation on the inquiry process. Her

presentation gave more exposure to the inquiry process and it became evident that most of those present were understanding what the process was about.

At the third quarterly meeting, Dr. Henry Levin and Dr. Ilse Brunner, both of Stanford University, gave presentations. Dr. Levin discussed a range of issues related to the accelerated schools process, including the second-year process; and Dr. Brunner gave a presentation on the inquiry process. By the end of this meeting, most of those present had an appreciation both for the importance of the inquiry process and the complexity of the steering process, which guides the cadre-based inquiry.

Third, the reflective dialogues have become one of the more important features of the quarterly accelerated schools meetings. At the first quarterly meeting, Dr. St. John gave a presentation on some of the factors that are critical to the success of the accelerated schools process, such as changing leadership style, dealing with conflict, and building linkages to the community. The discussion rapidly turned into a reflective dialogue about what the principals and other school leaders were learning from their experience. At the second quarterly meeting, time was set aside for the purpose of discussing the process. Dr. St. John had recently completed site visits to four of the schools and used insights gained in this process to facilitate a dialogue. By the third meeting the importance of these reflective dialogues seemed to be recognized by everyone present; indeed, the dialogues became integral to the entire training session.

The fourth quarterly meetings were held in Shreveport, Louisiana at Central Elementary School in May 1992. This meeting focused on facilitating dialogue among, and exchange between, the schools, about the cadre-based inquiry process. The meeting produced many insights for participants about the complexities of the inquiry process.

2.4.2 Network Building

It is increasingly evident to the project staff that the greatest benefit of the quarterly meetings has been that they contributed to the development of the state network. The direct benefits of this network include peer support, sharing of ideas and experiences, and the emergence of a proactive process in the network.

First, the critical importance of peer support should not be overlooked. The principals and other leaders in these schools have a difficult job. If their schools were perfect they would not have been recommended for the project. The accelerated schools process provides a systematic methodology for recognizing dysfunctional patterns in the school, then initiating processes that will transform these patterns. Support from peers seems integral for the process because isolation could create too much of a burden. The fact that principals are developing friendships seems to increase the pace of change in the schools.

Second, the sharing process, the exchanges in reflective dialogues and informal discussions also speeds the learning process. By sharing ideas and experiences, all members of the

network can learn from each others experiences. During the second year, the schools will get involved in pilot testing innovations they design. The open dialogue that has already emerged should help the evolution of a meaningful exchange about what can be learned from these pilot tests.

Third, the principals have begun to meet with the project manager and discuss their needs. As a result of this dialogue, the project staff has initiated planning for a principals' retreat, which will focus on values in accelerated schools, including the causes and consequences of racism in Louisiana public schools.

2.5 Status of the Project

The Louisiana State Accelerated Schools Project has accomplished its major first-year goals. As a result of the experiences with the first-year process, the project team has gained a more in-depth understanding of how to facilitate the start-up process in accelerated schools.

3.0 School Milestones

The first year of the project was organized to facilitate achievement of three major milestones in each school: 1) taking stock of the current condition of the school; 2) developing a vision for the school; and 3) identifying a set of challenges to guide the school restructuring process. These milestones are similar to many other school-based change processes, which usually include some form of self-assessment, planning, and implementation. The accelerated schools process differs from most of these other methodologies in some critical ways.

First, the accelerated schools process involves the whole school community. Most school change processes are implemented by a few within the school. Often the expertise resides in a few, or even in external experts who consult with the school. In contrast, the accelerated schools process is designed to involve the entire school community and to build expertise and professionalism within the school.

Second, the accelerated schools process is designed to address issues considered important by members of the school community. Many self-study and other school-based change processes are externally imposed. The small groups who implement these processes rapidly learn what external authorities expect and how to produce these things. The problem with this approach is that externally imposed criteria seldom mean anything to the teachers. Thus, many of these change processes can be implemented without changing the school. In contrast, the

accelerated schools process is designed to make the school community discover a new vision for its future and to find the will to move toward that vision.

Third, the accelerated schools process goes into more depth than most other school-based change strategies. Even most site-based management and participatory management models consider structural change -- such as increasing decision authority of the principal -- as the goal. They seldom even acknowledge that there are universal dysfunctional patterns that the school community itself must discover, and take responsibility for, before they can initiate meaningful changes. In contrast, the accelerated schools model is based on an understanding that the remediation process is dysfunctional, labeling it as the "villain's plan." The accelerated schools process is intended to encourage schools to go through an intensive self examination and discover what is not working in the school, and why it is not working. This involves digging deeper than is possible with most other school-based change methodologies.

Nevertheless there are milestones for schools that are engaged in the accelerated schools process. It is possible to achieve these milestones without having the philosophy of the process take hold. But it is not possible to complete the process without completing the milestones. Therefore this evaluation considers: a) how these schools have achieved their milestones (in this section); and b) whether the philosophy of

the accelerated schools process has taken hold in the schools (in the next section, which focuses on capacity building).

This report reviews the developments in each school, including: 1) background on the school; 2) an overview of the taking-stock process; 3) a statement of the school vision; and 4) a discussion of the major challenges that will be addressed in the second year of the accelerated schools process.

3.1 Central Elementary School

This is an urban inner-city elementary school located in a neighborhood that is scarred with poverty and abandoned houses, and split by construction of the I-49. The seventy-five-year-old school building has recently been declared an historic landmark in that for many years it was the only school, first through twelve, for several parishes where blacks could be educated. It consists of four separate buildings that are well-maintained and very spacious.

The school has Montessori pre-school, as well as regular elementary grades K through 5. There are 289 students: 97.5% black and 2.5% white; 98% receive free lunch; and 95% eligible for Chapter 1 services. There are 43 personnel positions.

3.1.1 Taking Stock

Taking stock was rather late starting at this school because the concepts and process seemed difficult for the school community to digest at first. It was not until after hearing Suzanne Stills in Baton Rouge, and the site facilitator from UNO

spent a week in Shreveport working with them, that they moved into action.

3.1.1.1 The Process

Once organized, they formed six working groups that gathered information from all the various sources suggested in the model. Each group included parent participation. Because parent involvement had always been so low at the school (mostly confined to the small group of middle-class parents in the Montessori classes), they scheduled a Parental Blitz that included three phases:

- Aa kick-off night program in which the students performed, food was served, media coverage before, during, and after was provided, and lots of door prizes -- bags of groceries -- were advertised beforehand and given away after the program. Dr. Meza gave parents an overview of the Accelerated Schools Project, the faculty dramatized the expected effects of the process in a skit they wrote themselves, and then taught the audience their new accelerated school song.

- Coffee and pastries were provided each morning for parents who wanted to drop in and discuss the Accelerated Schools Project with faculty as students were brought to school.

- Home visits were made to all remaining parents.

Aside from the success of having everyone working together in taking stock, leadership emerged that provided organization and depth for the remainder of the process.

3.1.1.2 The Findings

The school discovered a wealth of information that had not been previously examined. They found that the facility, resources, faculty skills and willingness, student attendance and efforts, technology and materials, and central office support

were all at a level higher than would be expected given the results they were actually getting in student achievement outcomes. The weak links appeared to be coordination and use of resources, limited knowledge and use of varied instructional strategies, a book/test driven curriculum, and the absence of collaboration among faculty.

3.1.2 The School Vision

3.1.2.1 The Process

At the beginning of Accelerated Schools Project, each person at the school wrote a description of his or her "dream school." In order to start developing a shared vision, these were redistributed, and they were each allowed to rewrite them with what they had learned with taking stock in mind. Gradually, over several weeks, these individual "dreams" were forged into the school's shared vision.

3.1.2.2 Vision Statement

"Central Elementary is a place where students master academic skills to work on or above grade level, develop high self-esteem, and accept responsibility for their behavior in an atmosphere of respect, cooperation, and communication with enthusiastic support from the staff, home and community."

3.1.3 Priorities for Action

The weaknesses summarized above (in 3.1.1.2) were discussed in terms of the areas of the school for which they have the greatest impact and the following cadres were developed: discipline, curriculum, resources, school climate.

3.2 George Cox Elementary School

Located in Gretna, LA, a suburb of New Orleans, George Cox is a member of Jefferson Parish Public School System. The physical plant is large and divided into three wings. Situated just off a major highway, the physical plant takes up most of the property and leaves limited room for outside activities.

The student population for the 1991-92 school year is 720 with a teaching staff of 39 and a support staff of 29. The ethnic breakdown of the students in grades Pre-kindergarten through sixth is two-thirds black, one-third white, with about one percent from other minorities. Most of the families in the school community are not home owners and live in one of the many large apartment complexes in the area. All of the students are transported by bus. The physical location of the school is not conducive to maintaining a community-based population.

3.2.1 Taking Stock

3.2.1.1 The Process

The taking-stock process began at Cox School with the establishment of a Wednesday afternoon meeting. The teachers from each grade level rotated the task of bringing refreshments to the meetings. The group of teachers and the assistant principal that attended the UNO Satellite Center summer training formed a planning group and began laying plans for the implementation of the accelerated schools process.

The faculty met in whole group meetings to identify the strengths of the school. Large sheets of paper were utilized to

record the results. These pages were posted in the halls of the school and became the "wall of strengths." The weaknesses of the school were also identified in whole group meetings.

As a group, the faculty combined the findings into six committees: concerned parents/lack of parent participation; discipline, appropriate/inappropriate behavior; finances; faculty and staff, concerns and responsibilities; curriculum; and student achievement. The faculty self-selected into the various committees to begin the brainstorming and data collection process. Surveys were constructed and administered to teachers, students, and parents.

3.2.1.2 The Findings

At the completion of the committee work, the faculty began meeting again as a whole to report, review, and synthesize the results of the group findings. The strengths that emerged from these meetings were: the whole language approach used by the lower grades, the caring and professional attitudes of the faculty, and the leadership qualities of the principal and assistant principal. Areas for growth were identified as: unity among the faculty, parental education and involvement in school activities, improving the self-esteem of all members of the school community, bringing the students up to grade level, closing the gap between the students' experimental base and curriculum base, and more training for teachers to enable them to effectively incorporate new teaching methods.

3.2.2 The School Vision

3.2.2.1 The Process

Each faculty member brought his/her own vision statement to a whole group meeting. Comments from each vision were recorded on large sheets of paper. The following five areas emerged: parental involvement, safety, student issues, adult issues, and aspects of learning. These five areas formed the vision statement for Cox School.

3.2.2.2 Vision Statement

"BUILDING HANDS, UNLOCKING MINDS, TOUCHING HEARTS

"George Cox School encourages and provides a cooperative venture in:

"Learning among students, parents, administration, faculty, staff, and community in a safe, secure, and healthy environment.

"Developing every child to his/her maximum potential emotionally, socially, academically, and physically.

"Establishing an environment in which everyone is treated with equal respect and dignity.

"Teaching and learning in a well equipped, child centered, instructional environment that builds on strengths and meaningful experiences.

"Therefore, students will complete their education at George Cox School with a desire to learn more and to become functioning and contributing citizens of the world."

3.2.3 Priorities for Action

Utilizing the findings of the various committees, the data collection information, and the findings from the surveys, the faculty meeting as a whole group identified the priority areas. Based on the vision statement, the following cadres were established: Parent Involvement, Adult Issues, Student Issues, and Curriculum.

Priorities that were recognized as the responsibility of all cadres are: developing the leadership abilities of each member of the faculty and staff; establishing a comfortable working relationship with all members of the faculty and staff; and developing the skills needed to enable the cadres work effectively with heavy emphasis on processing and personnel relationships or collegiality.

3.3 J.W. Faulk Elementary School

This is a large inner-city, K-5 school located on a five acre plot of land in a neighborhood that is made up of small businesses, private homes, and a large public housing complex. The school currently services children from predominantly low SES: 85% on free lunch, 7% receiving reduced lunches. Total personnel equals 103: 3 administrators, 46 classroom teachers, 6 paraprofessionals, 13 professional support staff, 7 itinerant professionals, 28 other support persons.

This large facility includes many portable units at the rear of the school property, which uses areas previously used as recreational space for students. The student enrollment is 951,

with virtually all students being bused in from a wide geographical catchment area. The school has several school/business partnerships, parent volunteers, central office support, collaborative administrative styles prior to the Accelerated Schools Project.

3.3.1 Taking Stock

3.3.1.1 The Process

Faculty, parents, staff, and students divided into working groups to put together the following self study information over a period of four months; school history, student achievement, school organization, parents, communication, students, curriculum and instruction, school climate/discipline, resources, community, and technology (computer use).

Surveys, records, interviews, brainstorming sessions were used to obtain data. Central office data and personnel were also used in the documentation process.

3.3.1.2 The Findings

An extensive report was compiled from the findings of each group mentioned above (available in the files), with many details on weaknesses and strengths. The conclusions and syntheses are below. Major strengths included: A majority of teachers and students feel that students function just as well after lunch as before; condition of classrooms is conducive to learning; administrators treat staff members as professionals; student attendance is good; and teachers are children-oriented. Major weaknesses included: Overall education levels of parents is low;

student behavior and discipline (high suspension and expulsion); 12% of student population retained last year; test scores in 30 percentile or below; no cross-grade meetings (many teachers do not know anyone other than those at same grade level), high turnover; excessive use of textbooks, worksheets, etc.

The administration and faculty in this school have very good communications, despite the large size. The concepts of collegiality and sharing were already being used, and the principal had a collaborative and empowering leadership style before Accelerated Schools Project was implemented. However, from the onset of the process, a wealth of new leadership and talents have surfaced among the faculty and staff. School-site facilitation by UNO is made easier because the faculty comprehend quickly, work well together, and are self starters. Before the Accelerated Schools Project, they were disjointed in their small grade-level groups and did not have an opportunity to meet and get to know others because of the size of the school. Now, taking stock has put cross-grade groups together and "...created the links that connect each to the other" (as a food service person put it recently).

3.3.2 The School Vision

3.3.3.1 The Process

A shared school vision was arrived at in several large and small group meetings wherein the dream school was discussed and the strengths and weaknesses considered. This process lasted about a month.

3.3.3.2 Vision Statement

"At J.W. Faulk, parents, students, and staff believe that:

REASON makes us achieve,

RESPONSIBILITY makes us accountable,

RESPECT makes us acceptable."

3.3.3 Priorities for Action

Weaknesses identified in taking stock were kept largely in the research categories but areas were combined under the following cadre headings: student social skills/co-curriculum; community resources; family involvement; school climate/discipline; curriculum and instruction; student achievement/motivation.

3.4 Fifth Ward Elementary

This is a rural Pre-K to 6th grade school in a mostly agricultural community (60% cane and other farming, 40% industry-chemical plants) with 346 students. The low-SES student population is 98% black (85% on free lunch, 20% Chapter 1). The school plant is modern, spacious, air conditioned, and includes large outdoor playgrounds.

Faculty and staff positions total 43 (24 certified, 19 non-certified), with 85% of the personnel living in the area of the school. Turnover is very low, and there are almost an equal racial split. Most students are 2nd and 3rd generation in the school. Special features include a church group tutorial program for students and the community; and a senior citizens' day center on the school campus in a separate building.

3.4.1 Taking Stock

3.4.1.1 The Process

Staff began this process by spending two weeks in whole group sessions brainstorming about what needed to be looked at and the best way to do it. For data collection they used school records, central office records, surveys, and questionnaires which were devised within the committees made up of faculty, staff, parents, and central office personnel. Questions on the surveys sought to get opinions on school and procedural strengths and weaknesses as perceived by respondents.

The school community self-selected into three working groups that collected data in the areas of school history/community relations, student achievement/discipline, and curriculum/instruction. One teacher remarked that it was the first time in her eighteen years at the school that "...everyone came together to work on one thing, even bus drivers and cafeteria staff attended most of the meetings...it was a change for some people to air out some feelings and express their opinions."

This school has a moderately slow and deliberate rural culture. Its collective understanding and enthusiasm for the Accelerated Schools Project cannot be measured by the speed with which they work or the elegance of their planning. They are unassuming, but understand and have internalized the concepts of the Accelerated Schools Project.

3.4.1.2 The Findings

The following were identified by the school as major strengths: dedicated and caring staff and faculty who live in the neighborhood of the school with the children and their parents; a good physical plant (large classrooms, atrium centrally located, large play yard); community/business support; and central office support. Other strengths highlighted were the support programs and staff, student and faculty attendance, drug and violence free campus, and enrichment program that supports the basic curriculum, and parents who care and will help out.

The major weaknesses were found to be the need for: a guidance counselor; planning periods for teachers; lower classroom ratios; teaching assistants; input on textbook adoption and timely receipt of textbooks; duty-free lunch; technical assistance on instructional strategies; playground equipment; techniques to motivate students in reading and math; involving parents in homework, getting them to value reading, and to encourage their children to read.

3.4.2 The School Vision

3.4.2.1 The Process

Everyone involved in taking stock was asked to create a "dream school" on paper and then to share it with the group. Using the strengths to address the weaknesses, the group brainstormed to find ways of making the school "...unique, creative, and a place where everyone would like to be...". They were encouraged to "think big", and after several meetings the

school community settled on what their ideal school would look and feel like.

3.4.2.2 Vision Statement

"Parents, faculty, staff, and community at Fifth Ward work to insure that all students, working on their own level or above, achieve the best possible education and become critical thinkers with positive attitudes and with respect for themselves and others."

3.4.3 Priorities for Action

The priorities were drawn from the weaknesses identified during the taking-stock process. Cadres have been formed in three areas: language arts, school/community improvement, mathematics.

3.5 Luling Elementary School

Luling Elementary School is a member of one of the most progressive public school systems in the State of Louisiana, St. Charles Parish Public Schools. The school is located in the small, rural community of Luling, LA. The staff consists of 40 teachers and 20 support personnel. Of the 555 students, 65% of the families are below the poverty level with 64% on free or reduced lunches. Sixty-seven percent of the students are considered at risk. Fifty-six percent of the students are black, 43% white, and 1% Hispanic.

The school was established as a neighborhood school. the environment changed when the school district closed two elementary schools and reorganized the school boundaries. Luling

became a school for grades Pre-kindergarten through second. Some students in the school live as far away as 12 miles. Luling students feed into Carver Elementary School for grades three through five.

The physical plant is divided into separate sections or wings. One wing houses the Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten grades, a second wing houses the first grade, and the second grade students are in the third wing. The cafetorium and library are separate buildings.

3.5.1 Taking Stock

3.5.1.1 The Process

During the fall of 1991, Luling Elementary School was involved in completing an evaluation report for the Criteria of Excellence program utilized by St. Charles Parish Public Schools. The faculty was divided into committees to accomplish this task. These committees remained intact for the taking stock process. The group of teachers and the assistant principal that attended the summer training in New Orleans conducted by the UNO Satellite Center formed the school improvement committee (steering committee).

The faculty self-selected into five working groups and focused on the areas of student achievement, curriculum and instruction, parent involvement, teacher morale, and school morale. Each committee collected data and brainstormed on the strengths of the school community within their area of interest. Parents and support personnel were added to the committees. The

results of the data collection and the brainstorming sessions were recorded on large sheets of paper and posted on the walls of the school.

To address the areas for growth, the faculty elected to meet and brainstorm as a whole group rather than meetings in the five working groups. The results of these meetings were also recorded on large sheets of paper and posted on the walls of the school.

3.5.1.2 The Findings

The following were identified by the school as strengths: the early childhood development program for at-risk four-year olds, an instructional specialist that works with at-risk students two and one-half days a week, family night (held twice a year), the "parents as partners in reading program," the financial and moral support from local companies provided to the school system, and the leadership abilities of the principal and the assistant principal, Rodney Lafon and Sharon Kerlec. Rodney Lafon was assigned as principal of Luling School partially because of his strong background of successful implementation of strategies and programs to improve parental and community involvement in schools. In his second year at Luling, both parent and community participation had increased dramatically. The school created a PTA Room where parents can gather for business and socializing. Grant money provided the funds to establish a parenting library. The library has books on a variety of topics that deal with some area of parent education.

The PTA has organized a volunteer program to assist in the classrooms. The adopt-a-school partner program generated volunteer and financial support from local businesses. Members of area churches became involved in the school by contributing both time and money.

The major weaknesses were found to be in the area of teacher and student morale. The Luling faculty consists of teachers with years of experience at the school and teachers that were moved from the two elementary schools that were closed due to the restructuring of the district. This blend coupled with the physical layout of the building resulted in a lack of unity and lack of cooperation among the faculty.

3.5.2 The School Vision

3.5.2.1 The Process

Each member of the Luling faculty was asked to describe, on paper, his or her "dream school." The school improvement committee (steering committee) incorporated the ideas from the individual visions and compiled three vision statements. These statements ere presented to a whole faculty meeting for review and revision. After several meetings, a unified vision was created.

3.5.2.2 Vision Statement

"Through the partnership of students, parents, school and community, we strive to create an environment conducive to learning. Our efforts will enable the students to reach their

highest potential and become responsible, confident, and productive learners."

3.5.3 Priorities for Action

From the vision statement, the following cadres were established: Curriculum, Discipline, Involvement, and Morale/Spirit.

3.5.3.1 The Process

Working in a series of whole group meetings and utilizing the results of the data collection and brainstorming processes, the faculty "chunked" or combined the strengths and weaknesses into four cadres.

3.5.3.2 Priorities for Action

The priorities of the involvement cadre include the continuation of the parent education programs and increasing community involvement. The curriculum cadre will focus on teaching techniques and strategies. Luling School will be involved with a district-sponsored and school-wide enrichment model beginning in the fall of 1992. The curriculum cadre hopes to plan ways to extend this involvement to all members of the faculty.

The priorities of the discipline cadre will focus on student self-esteem and attempting to determine ways to help the students that exhibit consistent discipline problems. The morale/spirit cadre will look for ways and strategies to promote more unity and self-esteem among the faculty and students.

3.6 Ryan Elementary School

Housed in a modern, spacious, and well-equipped building, Ryan Elementary School is a member of the East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System in Baton Rouge, LA. Grades Pre-kindergarten through fifth are housed in self-contained classrooms in the school with 38 teachers, 27 staff members, a principal, and a secretary. Student demographics include a population of 520 for the 1991-92 school year of which 80% are black, 19% are white, and 1% are from other minorities. Eighty percent of the students are on the free or reduced lunch program.

Twenty students walk to the school each day; the rest ride school buses. A small number of the families own their own homes. The majority live in apartment complexes or projects.

3.6.1 Taking Stock

3.6.1.1 The Process

The group of teachers and principal that attended the UNO Accelerated Schools Satellite Center summer training in New Orleans returned to the school and executed a training program for the remainder of the faculty, for the staff, and for the parents. Working in whole group meetings, the school community began by brainstorming about the dream school they wanted. Following this, the faculty refocused and began listing first the strengths and then the weaknesses of the school. These were recorded on large sheets of paper which were posted around the school.

3.6.1.2 The Findings

Some of the recognized strengths of Ryan School were: project read, a multi-sensory approach to reading; resource and special education teachers working in regular classrooms in the upper grades in a collaborative effort; teachers being trained in the Math Their Way program; and the school adopters (the Press Club, National Guard, and the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity from Southern University provide volunteer time and financial support to the school). The areas of weakness identified were: teaching techniques and strategies to enable teachers to meet the needs of the students partially in the areas of math and science; and unity building among the faculty.

3.6.2 The School Vision

3.6.2.1 The Process

The faculty, staff, and parents met in whole group meetings and brainstormed about their dream school. The results were recorded on large sheets of paper. A volunteer committee consolidated the information into a vision statement. The vision developed by the volunteer committee was brought back to a whole group meeting for revision. This process was repeated several times until the final version of the vision statement was adopted.

3.6.2.2 Vision Statement

"In a positive atmosphere supported by school, home, and community:

"Our students will work on or above grade level by fifth grade.

"Our students will develop a sense of pride, a positive self-image, and a sense of responsibility.

"Our students will learn to accept and respect others as they are.

"Our students will develop into citizens who will function productively in society."

3.6.3 Priorities for Action

From the vision statement, the following cadres were established: school climate, academic achievement, and school/community/family relations.

Meeting together as a unit, the faculty, staff, and parents revisited the results of the taking-stock process. The information from the large sheets was condensed into several general areas. The topics or subject areas that surfaced from these meetings formed the cadres.

The priorities for the school climate cadre will focus on teacher morale, large class sizes, and faculty unity. The academic achievement cadre will prioritize raising the achievement of the students. The school/community/family relations cadre will address ways to include and educate family members so that they will be able to assist their children with homework and will be productively involved in the education of their children.

3.7 McDonogh No. 24 Elementary School

This is an inner-city New Orleans school located near the river very close to Tulane University and upper-income areas of the city. With an operational staff of 69 (68 certified and 1 non-certified), it provides its 316 students with a variety of programs and services. The school is an equal split of regular education and special education, but the majority of the students (302 black, 6 white, 8 Hispanic) are from low-SES families -- 300 are eligible for free lunches and twelve are receiving reduced lunches, and 112 students are in Chapter 1 classes.

The school is unique in that it has a one-to-three ratio between special and regular education. Its regular education program offers one class at every level from kindergarten to seventh grades, with a federally funded Chapter 1 pre-school class that uses "a priori" reading methods. Next year they will add the eighth grade to complete the full elementary offering. The special education program is one of the largest in the city, with almost all of the deaf and hearing-impaired public elementary school children from pre-school age to the seventh grade assigned there. Two classes offer generic services for mild/moderate students, four classes provide services for emotionally and severely disturbed students.

3.7.1 Taking Stock

3.7.1.1 The Process

This school worked particularly long and hard on the taking-stock process. Parent and student involvement had not been a

focus there prior to the Accelerated Schools Project. The administration and faculty spent considerable time building the capacity of students to understand the model and what it could mean to them through grade meetings and exercises designed to teach them the difference between long-range planning and goals and short-term goals. The point was for students to comprehend the immediate and long-range effects they would realize from the Accelerated Schools Project, and also to build a capacity for them to have representation in taking stock and forging the vision. Similar activities were held with parents. The end result was five parents in regular attendance at meetings, and two very articulate and informed students (one representing lower grades and one for upper grades) who interacted with the faculty and staff throughout the process. The actual taking stock followed all the usual methods outlined in the process.

3.7.1.2 The Findings

Although the information the process yielded was quite plentiful, the committees reduced the findings to the following: school organization -- strengths are the willingness of all parties to be involved; weaknesses are the lack of support for involvement in the past, poor relationships among faculty and with administration, unresolved issues between faculty and the district. Curriculum and instruction -- strengths are the present curriculum and textbooks, the capabilities of the faculty to find flexibility within it, and the recent improvement in students' results; weaknesses are the lack of a phonics program,

need for program to improve students' handwriting, and discipline in the classroom. Parental involvement: strengths are many parents live in the neighborhood and do not work; weaknesses are the PTA that does not function, and the need to vary the representation groups of the parents that get involved. Resources -- strengths are the variety within the school and the community; weaknesses are the lack of appropriate, timely, and regular use of all available resources. Other areas of concern: quality, timing and quantity of supplies; planning for meaningful involvement of community volunteers; flexible schedules; lunch duties; funds to acquire materials for individual class projects.

3.7.2 The School Vision

3.7.2.1 The Process

Eleven meetings were held before the entire school community reached consensus on the content and meaning of the shared vision. Everyone had input, from the youngest student to as many parents as could be encouraged to submit their ideas in writing. The process involved discussions for collapsing several submitted versions into a few until the general concepts and intent were expressed in one version. The final step involved two meetings on discussing and reaching consensus on the shared meaning of the words actually used.

3.7.2.2 Vision Statement

"In a positive atmosphere, our students, staff, parents, and community work to believe in ourselves, learn to the best of our abilities, become independent and creative thinkers, respect

others, take responsibility for our own actions, and continue to have the enthusiasm and drive necessary to succeed in the future years."

3.7.3 Priorities for Action

The vision statement was intended to identify all areas that will be continual foci for the school. With that in mind, the priority areas were taken from the vision statement: self-esteem/positive atmosphere, creative thinking, discipline, involvement (whole school community).

3.8 Shady Grove Elementary

Shady Grove Elementary School was established in 1955 by the Ouachita Parish School Board as a result of growth in the community and the overcrowding of area schools. The school opened its doors to approximately 350 white students in grades one through seven.

The school today provides a full range of academic services for students in kindergarten through sixth grade with two special education classes. This institution serves a representative cross-section of the population of the community in which it is based. This includes a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, a balance of racial representation, and students with varying ranges of intellectual abilities. The people of the Shady Grove community basically fall into the following categories concerning source of income: a) unemployed, b) welfare recipients, c) common laborers, d) a few skilled laborers, e) workers in fast food businesses, f) store clerks, g) a few professional people.

Grades kindergarten through the third are self-contained. Grades four, five and six are semi-departmentalized. Resource classes are provided in the area of special education for gifted students, learning disabled students, and bilingual students. French is taught to all fourth and fifth grade students. Remedial instruction is provided to economically deprived students through the Chapter 1 program.

The student population of Shady Grove for the 1991-92 school year is 471. The ethnic background of the students is 50% black, 49% white, and 1% Hispanic and Asian. Seventy-five percent of the students are on the free or reduced lunch plan. According to the data collected from classroom teachers, 335 students entered Shady Grove for the 1991-92 school year ready to compete at or above grade level. This represents 69% of the students. Using the 1991-92 California Achievement Test (CAT) scores and based on the national averages, between 41.9% and 53.9% of Shady Grove's Kindergarten students scored at or slightly below grade level. In the spring of 1991, 73 sixth grade students took the CAT. Thirty-seven students scored at or above the 50th percentile indicating grade percentile below grade level.

The faculty consists of 26 teachers, a principal, two secretaries, and 31 ancillary personnel including itinerant professionals, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, and cafeteria personnel.

3.8.1 Taking Stock

3.8.1.1 The Process

Shady Grove began this process by establishing a series of meetings which were held before and after school and during the school day. Each meeting focused on specific topics to introduce and educate the members of the faculty that did not attend the summer training conducted by the UNO Satellite Center in New Orleans, LA. Faculty, staff, parents, students, and central office personnel were invited to these brainstorming sessions. The Shady Grove training notebook was printed for all faculty members and was divided into sections with various sections assigned for discussion at each meeting. The position of facilitator for these meetings rotated among the faculty members that attended the summer training.

Time during the school day was made available in three ways: a) the Principal, Cathy Stockton, kept classes in the cafetorium; b) all school recesses freed up teachers; and c) occasional early school dismissal was approved by the central office. An in-depth study of every aspect of the school was conducted. Surveys were constructed and distributed to teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria and custodial personnel, parents, students, and community and business leaders.

3.8.1.2 The Findings

As a result of the brainstorming sessions, the surveys, and other data collection, a steering committee and six cadres or working groups were formed: curriculum and instruction, student

and community, student achievement, school climate/discipline/ self-esteem, parental involvement, and school organization. Each cadre held a series of meetings to brainstorm the strengths and weaknesses of their particular area.

Some of the strengths recognized were: the professional library housed in the teachers' lounge; the published booklet of resources shared by teachers; the buddy system where upper-grade teachers are paired with lower-grade teachers to observe and assist each other; the all-school recess where the duty teachers and upper-grade students play organized games with lower-grade students; the lower- and upper-grade choirs; the Chimettes (bell ringers); the cafeteria atmosphere where teachers have the option of sitting together or with their classes and the students have the self-discipline to sit alone; the cooperative and professional commitment of the faculty and staff; and the leadership and dedication of the principal.

The major challenge area identified by the faculty was the need to facilitate the growth of professional knowledge and skills of the faculty, staff, and parents of Shady Grove School.

3.8.2 The School Vision

3.8.2.1 The Process

Each member of the Shady Grove community was asked to write a description of his or her "dream school." The six cadres combined the versions supplied by the various members and formulated a school vision. These visions were posted around the

cafetorium. The final vision was developed in a whole group meeting of teachers, staff, students, and parents.

3.8.2.2 Vision Statement

"Shady Grove Accelerated School is a place where students can develop a positive self-image, a sense of responsibility, and the opportunity to acquire academic skills that are necessary in order to be 'on' or 'above' grade level through the combined efforts of school, home, and community resources."

3.8.3 Priorities for Action

From the vision statement the following cadres were established: curriculum and instruction, parental involvement, school climate/discipline/self-esteem.

The findings of the various cadres were written on sentence strips and posted on the walls of the cafetorium. At a whole group meeting of teachers, staff, students, and parents, the sentence strips were moved and/or combined to form the three cadres listed above.

The priorities of the school climate/discipline/self-esteem cadre are: a) one school-wide discipline plan for grading conduct; b) to sponsor a drawing every six weeks for students who demonstrate good behavior; c) to raise student morale; d) to boost teacher morale; and e) to improve self-esteem.

The parental involvement cadre prioritized the following: a) more two-way communication between parents and teachers; b) a plan for involving parents; c) a plan for training parents in skills that are necessary to be supportive; d) motivate parents

to participate in decision making; and e) equalize parent involvement among grade levels.

The priorities of the curriculum and instruction cadre are: a) high expectations for all students, b) more tracking other than referencing to cum folders; c) more interdisciplinary teaching; and d) instruction with concrete activities.

3.9 Status of the Schools

All eight of the schools included in the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project have successfully completed the three milestones for the first year of the project. More importantly, these schools appear to be building the capacity to pilot test major school-designed innovations, the process that will be the focal point of the second year of the project for the initial eight schools.

4.0 CAPACITY BUILDING

In addition to providing a systematic structure for the school restructuring process, there are three principles -- unity of purpose, empowerment with responsibility, and building on strengths -- that are integral to the accelerated schools process. Based on our experience with, observations of, and research on the implementation of the accelerated schools process, we have concluded that these principles need to be experienced at the "in use" level, for the accelerated schools process to take hold in a school. It is easy for most administrators and teachers to "espouse" these principles; indeed, they are nearly universally recommended in the contemporary literature on school change and restructuring. It is much more difficult for most people, whether they are in education or other professions, to practice these principles at an "in use" level.

Therefore, as part of this evaluation, we have examined the evidence that the principles of accelerated schools are being practiced within the schools. Evidence about each of the principles is discussed below. This discussion draws from interviews conducted during the site visits, and observations of the schools by the project teams. However, the names of schools and school leaders are not identified, as this section is not intended as an evaluation of individual schools. Rather, it is intended to document the foundation that is being built in the project as a whole.

4.1 Unity of Purpose

The concept of unity was easily understood by participants in the summer training session in New Orleans. However, an inequitable situation was set up in the schools by virtue of the fact that only some of the teachers from each school attended the session. As discussed earlier, each of the schools has contended with this disparity during the year, through the design and execution of school-based training and the provision of opportunities for other teachers (those who did not attend the New Orleans session) to get involved in the accelerated schools network. In addition to this surface indication that those trained in New Orleans were concerned about building unity, there have been a couple of other indicators that schools in the network are building unity.

4.1.1 Widespread Involvement

As long as accelerated schools remains an activity of a few in the school, the process has little chance of taking hold in a meaningful way. Most school reforms have a similar fate: a few are trained in the principles and process; these few have responsibilities for executing the process (and possibly for training others); and the new process (or technique) usually is not widely accepted, which creates an atmosphere conducive to failure. Therefore, accelerated schools could easily fall into this type of reproducing pattern, if steps were not taken in the schools to secure wider involvement.

As part of the interviews in the schools, an effort was made to talk with teachers who had not attended the New Orleans training, as well as teachers who had attended the training. The site visit teams were interested in how the accelerated schools process has been communicated to the teachers who did not attend the New Orleans training, whether they felt they understood the principles of accelerated schools (and how the concept differed from what they had previously done in the school), whether they were involved in the taking-stock process, and whether they had a personal sense of vision about the future of the school. Each of these factors is discussed briefly below.

First, it was abundantly evident from the interviews that each school had organized a school-based training process and that most, if not all, teachers had attended the school training. In all schools, teachers who had attended the New Orleans summer training were involved in planning the training. In some schools only a subgroup of the teachers who attended the New Orleans training were involved in planning and executing the training, while in other schools, all of the teachers who attended the New Orleans training had been involved in designing and executing the school-based training. In all cases the Accelerated Schools Specialists were involved in the process.

The school-based training sessions were uniformly shorter in duration than the New Orleans session. Thus the full range of experiences and information given by the UNO team in the New Orleans session could not be repeated in the school-based

training. The school-based training was simply an introduction to the process. The fact that not all the information was covered established those who had attended the New Orleans sessions as the in-school experts. Further, the disparity in knowledge was not reduced substantially by the school-based training, because the expertise of those who attended the New Orleans training increased by virtue of the fact that they participated in the design and execution of the school-based training.

Second, it was evident that the concepts behind accelerated schools -- the three principles and, in most cases, the systematic design of the process -- were communicated in the school-based training sessions. Those who attended only the school-based training could generally explain what these concepts were, but they were usually not internalized. Several had questions about the meaning of the principles and doubts about whether it could really be implemented. Therefore, after school-based training, the accelerated schools process still ran the risk of being a project that sounded good at an espoused level, but that was not acted on in any meaningful way.

On deeper reflection, the presence of these doubts was not a negative phenomenon. It showed that these were experienced teachers who had seen reform fads come and go. One of the reasons why we reached this conclusion, that the presence of widespread personal doubts is not in and of itself problematic, is that most of those who attended UNO training also harbored

doubts. Those who attended UNO training usually had a better understanding of the principles and process, but they had doubts about whether it could be implemented in their schools, about whether they could actually do it.

The fact that personal doubts by teachers were expressed to members of the UNO project team who made the site visit, was a positive sign. It showed that many in the schools were listening to what they had been exposed to and were thinking about what it really meant for the school; and that they could openly express doubts with each other and with the New Orleans team.

Third, there was nearly universal involvement in the taking-stock process in all of the schools. All of the schools formed several committees (or cadres) to investigate different aspects of the school and made efforts to ensure there was a mixture of people on each of these committees. Some schools assigned people to groups at random. Others allowed teachers to self select. Still others asked teachers to indicate their priorities, then mixed people into groups -- a practice that gave everyone a choice, while not having subgroups of friends clustered on the same committees. The taking-stock process had two advantages for the schools.

One advantage was that everyone, or almost everyone, got involved in the hard work of taking stock. Taking stock involves doing research on the school: conducting surveys, interviewing, attending group discussions and so forth. By getting actively involved in doing research on the school, most people began to

internalize some aspects of the process, to see that this process might really be different from most other change processes that start with a bang, but die out sooner or later. So the process of being involved in the taking-stock process helped to remove some of the doubts, which diminished the potentially problematic nature of having doubts in the first place.

Second, the taking-stock process helped to build a sense of unity. By being involved in taking stock, teachers began to invest personally and feel committed. Most communicated a sense of having worked hard. Some were bored with the process and felt as though they had beat a dead horse. Others felt enthusiastic. But the fact that almost everyone was involved gave them some common experience.

Finally, the process of being involved in taking stock gave teachers an opportunity to think about their schools and what they might become. Some schools had already developed preliminary vision statements when the site visits were conducted, others had not. Therefore, in some cases teachers could say what the vision was and other times they could only say what they thought should be in it. But most teachers had a personal sense of vision for their schools. Usually they expressed their vision in terms of the children's academic progress, and feelings about themselves. Thus, the purpose of accelerated schools -- of better serving the at-risk student (or "all students" as some teachers and principals prefer to express it) -- was integral to the way most teachers thought about the

future of their schools. The fact that most teachers, in all of the schools visited, shared this sense about the importance of their students, served as another indicator of a building sense of unity.

4.1.2 Healing Divisions

One of the patterns evident in the schools that are becoming accelerated schools in Louisiana is that schools that serve at-risk students are internally divided. Our research on the schools involved as pilot sites during the first year of the Chevron project found that: 1) there were internal divisions, or factions, in the schools; 2) there were divisions between the schools and the communities they served; and 3) the capacity to heal these divisions may be necessary for success. Both types of divisions were evident in each of the eight schools included in the state network.

The divisions within the schools took many forms. Interestingly, these divisions were discussed in interviews, which indicates a growing awareness in the schools. In some schools there were tensions between the races. Racial tensions ran particularly high in the schools visited before the November 1991 gubernatorial election (Duke vs. Edwards). In some schools there were divisions among grade levels, with teachers in the upper and lower grades blaming each other for problems in the schools. In others, there were divisions between those teachers who got along with a principal and those who did not. And in a few instances, all of these divisions were voiced in interviews.

In our view the fact that these internal divisions could even be discussed was a positive development, since it indicated awareness of problems facing the schools and an openness with the UNO project team.

There was also some evidence of healing some of these internal divisions in some of the schools. For example, at one school a group of teachers who historically had not been involved in school-wide activities had gotten actively involved in the accelerated schools process. At another school, a school leader who had not thought much about the impact of the divisive gubernatorial election commented that they had recognized that they had a problem and had begun to talk about it.

An even more visible sign of the desire to heal these internal divisions was evident at the recent principals meeting, where a suggestion was made to have a retreat to discuss how to deal with issues of race in the schools. The fact that internal divisions have become an important issue for school leaders is an indicator that the problems will be addressed, and hopefully healed with time.

Second, schools that serve the underclass are usually viewed with some negativity by their communities. Schools have begun to discover some of the problems they encounter in this regard as part of the taking-stock process. For example, in some schools there were poor response rates to community surveys.

4.2 Empowerment With Responsibility

The coupling of responsibility with the more general concept of empowerment is an important aspect of the accelerated schools model. In a very real sense, empowerment, if it is not coupled with the personal and institutional process of taking responsibility, can be meaningless. Embedded in Levin's concept of empowerment is an understanding that people in the schools need to take responsibility, collectively and individually, for their roles in the schools as they are, as well as for engaging in the process of changing the schools. This involves teachers in a process of discovering a personal sense of causality, and requires that administrators develop leadership styles that foster this faculty development process.

4.2.1 Taking Personal Responsibility

The interviews with teachers indicate a great potential in all of the schools for the development of more empowered responsibility. Argyris, Putnam and Smith (1987) argue that people go through an unfreezing process before they begin to relate to others in a way that fosters free and informed choice, internal commitment, and taking of personal responsibility for their own actions. They further argue that a process of testing new behaviors -- of trying out new ways of behaving in organizational settings -- is indicative of the unfreezing process.

From our interviews and observations, it appears that this individual transition process has two stages. The first stage

involves testing to see: (a) whether others are really serious about the concept of empowerment; and (b) what types of personal behaviors are effective in promoting a change in the culture of the school. The second stage, which only emerges for those who do the testing when they feel the environment is safe, involves making personal commitments to making the school work.

4.2.1.1 Testing New Behaviors

It is evident, both from interviews and from observations in meeting, that many teachers have begun the quasi-systematic process of testing the meaning of empowerment for themselves in their schools. The critical importance of this early unfreezing process should not be overlooked by the UNO project team, the principals, or the teachers themselves.

Some of the testing has a playful quality about it. For example, in a school-wide meeting at one school, a teacher who would not otherwise do so, stood up and said, "Since we are empowered now, I'll take some responsibility for running the meeting." This personal action, taken in a school where the principal usually ran all meetings and teachers seldom said much, except to ask clarifying questions, was an informal test, undertaken in a playful manner. The principal laughed and sat down, which gave the teachers a few moments of laughter. It also gave them a cue that they could change the organizational norms, if they took the initiative.

Such playful "experiments" are an important part of the learning process in the schools. The accelerated schools process

engages school members in a process of changing dysfunctional patterns. The tacit authority of principals usually inhibits teachers from asserting themselves. One of the easiest ways for a teacher to test whether an administrator is serious about empowerment is through a playful act, since it is less risky than a direct confrontation.

In some cases this process of testing the waters takes a more serious form, particularly when it confronts behavioral norms in the school. For example, in another school, one of the teachers on the steering committee took it upon herself to confront the principal about key issues, such as who should be included in certain sessions. These confrontations were behind closed doors in the principal's office. The teacher had a feeling that if certain perceived injustices were not dealt with, the accelerated schools process would not work in the school. After having had some initial success with personally confronting the principal behind closed doors, this teacher began coaching other teachers to do the same thing. In this school, this emerging pattern of confrontation behind closed doors was a sign of an initial unfreezing. In retrospect, the fact that these particular confrontations went on behind closed doors seemed necessary for two reasons: one, the principal was allowed to save face in public, which seemed important in the culture of this particular school; and, two, it allowed a group of teachers who felt they were outside of the "inner circle" to test whether their points of view were really wanted and would be considered.

Many cases of testing behavior have been observed by the UNO project team and described by teachers in private interviews and discussions. This process of testing and making personal judgements about whether those in authority are really serious about the espoused concept of "empowerment" seems to be a critical element of the capacity building process in the schools.

4.2.1.2 Making Personal Commitments

If the process of testing gives the right cues to teachers in the school, then an environment that fosters personal commitment can develop. There is evidence that such an environment is developing in most of the schools. The process of making personal commitments to the accelerated schools process work has started for teachers, as well as principals, in these schools. A few examples illustrate the importance of this process.

At one of the fall training sessions, a white teacher heard Dr. Levin say that one of the goals of an accelerated school is that the school become the type of place where teachers can bring their children. After attending the meeting she went home and reflected on this comment, then decided to enroll her child in her school, which served mostly black, poor children. This personal action, along with other personal actions taken by teachers in the school, indicates a growing sense of personal commitment among some of the teachers in the school. Indeed, there is evidence that the teaching culture is actually changing in this school. In the past, the school has served as a place

for new teachers awaiting tenure -- and there was a high rate of teacher turnover in the school. Now there is dialogue in the school about making a commitment to stay and make this process work. One gets a feeling from listening to these teachers that energy and their sense of personal commitment can change this school.

Another principal gave serious thought about whom to bring to a second quarterly meeting: whether to bring one of the key teachers who was helping to get the process going, or to bring a teacher who still had reservations about the process? She decided to bring two teachers from a special program that was distant from the main part of the school. These teachers seemed reserved through most of the first day of meetings. But before leaving on the second day, one of the two commented to a UNO Accelerated Schools Specialist that they had been tired the first day from the long drive to the meeting, but that they had really enjoyed the meeting. Upon returning they talked about their experience with several colleagues. At the next quarterly meeting, several teachers from the school attended at their own expense. In this particular school, the quarterly meetings have taken on importance to the teachers as a means of learning more about accelerated schools and keeping up their personal motivation, and building a deeper sense of community among teachers in the school.

The process of making a personal commitment to the school was also evident in some of the interviews with teachers made

during the site visits. For example, when asked about why there had been divisions between teachers in the upper and lower grades in her school, a teacher reflected for a moment, then commented that she could not speak for others or assign blame to other teachers. She continued, that if this process was going to work, she needed to look at herself, her own teaching, and her own interactions in the school. These comments indicated she was internalizing the principles of accelerated schools, and using the experience of taking stock as a means of taking personal responsibility.

This process of teachers making a personal commitment to the school and the accelerated schools process, is a vital step in the capacity-building process. The commitment of teachers is one of the special qualities that seems "intangible", but nonetheless evident, in most excellent schools. Therefore it seems important to pay attention to how this inner sense of individual commitment develops in schools and to consciously evolve action strategies that foster its emergence.

4.2.2 Change in Leadership Styles

A distinction can be made between two type of action theories: "espoused theories" and "theories in use" (Argyris, Putnam, and Smith, 1987; Argyris and Schon, 1973; and Schon, 1985). An espoused theory is a statement by an individual about what he or she believes should be done in a certain situation, while a theory in use is what he or she actually does in that situation. Many school leaders espouse beliefs in empowerment,

yet few actually behave in a way that promotes meaningful teacher empowerment.

For an accelerated school to work, it is necessary for principals and other school leaders to begin to narrow the gap between their espoused theories and their theories in use; and it is essential that both emphasize empowerment. There are two possible ways to promote empowerment in schools. One way to achieve this congruence and focus is to put new principals in the schools and hope they will empower teachers; the other is to encourage and facilitate change in leadership strategies (the actual theories in use) used by teachers and principals. Research to date indicates that both strategies can work and that both can fail (Davidson, 1992). In this project the UNO team is trying to develop processes that support the development of facilitative leadership styles by principals and other leaders. There is some initial evidence that these efforts have helped provide a supportive atmosphere for school leaders to develop new styles of leadership.

4.2.2.1 Facilitating Empowerment

Most people who attain leadership positions in education have been instructed, both formally and informally, in the methods of control. Indeed, most administrative theory in education emphasizes control. Some also have been trained in modern human relations techniques, which are also widely used in graduate education programs. But this combination of skill sets actually seldom facilitates empowerment. Therefore most

principals, whether they are new to a school or have been in a school for a long time, have to learn how to facilitate meaningful teacher empowerment. In essence, principals need to learn a new theory in use, one that is consonant with the theory of empowerment espoused in the accelerated schools training material. There are several ways principals can learn these facilitating skills.

One approach is through experimentation, whether it be playful or deliberate. Several of the principals in the project have experimented with bringing different groups of teachers to accelerated schools training sessions. They have had to weigh the benefits of building the expertise of a few against the spreading of opportunity to learn about the project. The tradeoffs between these approaches have been openly discussed in quarterly meetings, which has facilitated the "craft" aspect of the state project.

Principals can also learn how to "experiment in action." In an interview, one of the principals described two of her "experiments in action". In the first instance, she described sitting in a meeting with parents and teachers. She observed that every time parents expressed their desires that she and the teachers became defensive, justifying what they were already doing. This "reaction" to comments taken as criticisms appeared to cause the parents to be quiet and not express themselves. She shared this observation with some other teachers and in their next meeting with parents, the teachers tried to avoid defensive

responses to ideas expressed by parents. Not only did the parents express themselves more openly in the second meeting, but the teachers felt there was an improvement in the quality of communication with the parents. Several teachers described the significance of this event in their interviews.

In the second "experiment in action", the principal observed in a meeting that the teachers seemed reticent to talk about her. She decided to leave the meeting and told the teachers to say whatever they wanted, record what they wanted, and to share what was appropriate with her. After the meeting, the principal reviewed the minutes of the meeting and learned some things about the teachers' concerns. More importantly, in interviews with the site visit team, several teachers described this episode as a marker event. It served as a "cue" to them that the principal was serious about the empowerment process and was trying to find ways to let it happen.

Another principal committed herself to providing an opportunity for each teacher in the school to learn firsthand about accelerated schools. As a first-year principal she wanted to break through the barriers of some teachers feeling on the "inside" with the principal, and others feeling on the "outside". She had experienced this atmosphere while serving as a teacher in the school. Her commitment to having everyone attend at least one off-campus meeting for accelerated schools served as a cue for the teachers that she was serious about the process. This

principal's commitment to breaking down barriers in the school was mentioned in several teachers' interviews.

4.2.2.2 Peer Support

The process of changing one's own leadership style is not easy. Principals have learned from years of experience about how to be in control; therefore, deliberate experimentation with ways of giving up power can be difficult, at least at first. One of the positive results of the quarterly meetings is that the principals in the network are providing each other with much needed peer support.

One form of support is exhibited in playfulness, teasing and joking about being principals in accelerated schools. The principals have gotten to know each other well enough to tease each other about episodes or events they have observed, about their schools or their reports. They also tell jokes about things that happen in their schools. These often lighthearted exchanges illustrate bonding and interpersonal support among principals.

The principals are also starting to use the network as a means of personal and professional growth. They are expressing issues that should be addressed at quarterly meetings, suggesting topics for retreats, and generally sharing their experiences with each other. This process not only helps them to understand that they are not alone, but also gives them a peer network to dialogue with about how to facilitate empowerment and experiment with new modes of behavior.

4.3 Building on Strengths

The process of building on strengths can begin at the outset of the accelerated schools process with celebrations of the program. At a fundamental level, the principle of building on strengths can be said to be taking hold when school leaders begin to recognize that conditions in the school that were thought to be obstacles to change, could in fact be opportunities. And finally, as the number of instructional leaders in a school begins to grow and a dialogue emerges, there is an opportunity for change, and a sense of community can emerge -- a community that supports inquiry about school transformation. Our observations to date suggest these developments occur sequentially in the schools, as though they are stages in building communities of inquiry.

4.3.1 Celebrations

The process of becoming an accelerated school involves a lot of hard work. Hard work without time for celebration can kill innovations. Fortunately, the accelerated schools methodology encourages celebrations of the process of becoming an accelerated school. And Louisiana is a state that has a capacity to celebrate, as evidenced by the Mardi Gras celebrations across the state. The schools in the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project have evolved ways of celebrating their involvement in accelerated schools and their accelerated learning.

4.3.1.1 Celebrating Accelerated Schools

The accelerated schools training materials recommends that schools have a special event to celebrate becoming an accelerated school. In Louisiana, parades are a commonly accepted form of celebrating special events. Most of the schools have had parades to celebrate becoming and being accelerated schools.

4.3.1.2 Celebrating Special Events

Special events are another means schools can use to build on strengths. For example, Hollibrook School, one of the national model accelerated schools, created a Parent University where teachers volunteered their time and talents to conduct classes in areas such as: a) how to read a story to your child, b) how to help with math homework, and c) how to improve your child's writing skills. The classes were offered in the evenings and on Saturdays.

The schools in the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Network also had several special events that served as a symbol of their learning in new areas. Examples include:

- One school had a Native American festival which was prepared for by using the theme of the culture and life style of the Indians across all subjects for one month. Parents joined in by coming to the school to work with students in constructing an Indian village, a frontier town, and costumes.
- Another school celebrated multi culturalism with a food festival. Then two months later, they celebrated improved state standardized test scores with an ice cream party and a balloon release in the school's parking lot.
- Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday was celebrated by one school in a week of essay writing and culminated in a ceremony of songs, readings, and the planting of a tree

dedicated to King's memory near the front entrance to the school.

- Children in another school presented a talent show to faculty and parents in which they performed skits, songs, "raps," and dances expressing what it meant to them to be in an accelerated school.

- A locally recognized artist was a physical education teacher in one school, but has recently been reassigned by the principal, at the request of the steering committee, as the art instructor after he sketched the world on the wall of one of the buildings and allowed the students to paint in "people, places, and things" for each continent they either researched on their own or studied in class. The completed wall was featured in the Baton Rouge Advocate Newspaper.

- Students of all races took part in a play about the life and work of Harriet Tubman for Black History Month in one school. Special ed students also had key roles.

- Students in another school paraded down the surrounding main streets led by a police and fire truck escort. Each grade level in the school represented some aspect of the values of the accelerated schools process. The first grade was the "Krewe of Positive Self-Esteem," the third grade was the "Krewe of Positive Thinkers," the Kindergartners were the "Krewe That Could," and so forth. Krewe is a familiar term referring to Mardi Gras clubs or organizations.

- "Accelerate--Celebrate--Liberate--Educate--Participate --Try Not to Hate--Graduate" was the theme of a fourth school's kick-off program for the Accelerated Schools Project. A parade and talent show were the scheduled activities.

- Still another school had a multi-cultural fair that culminated in a sampling of the foods from the various cultures studied. The upper-grade students assisted the cafeteria staff in preparing the various dishes.

These developments are important because they pull people in the school -- students as well as teachers -- to celebrate learning. These celebrations help create a new, more positive, internal image of the school. Most of these schools have historically been looked down on by their communities. The

celebrations give a cue, to both internal and external publics, that the school is a special place.

4.3.1.3 Hosting Network Meetings

During the first year of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project, four schools will host quarterly meetings. The other four schools are currently scheduled to host meetings. Each of the three schools that have hosted quarterly meetings have used the meetings as an opportunity both to share the strengths of the school with others from the accelerated schools network and to gain publicity for the school. In short, the process of hosting a state-level accelerated schools meeting has become an event worthy of note.

The process of hosting the quarterly meeting has at least three direct advantages to the host school: 1) each school provides tours of the school for all the visitors, which appears to add to the feelings of most teachers and students that what they are doing is noteworthy; 2) hosting the meeting creates an opportunity for more of the host school's teachers to attend the training session; and 3) having the crowds on site gives the school an opportunity to secure local publicity. Each of these developments seems to have a positive influence on the image of the school.

First, hosting these meetings adds to a building sense of commitment within the school. Some of the schools that have hosted the quarterly meetings have provided opportunities for students to interact with guests, as tour guides and/or in shows

(songs, plays, and so forth) where they celebrate their learning and the process of becoming an accelerated school. Second, each principal who has hosted a meeting has encouraged teachers to attend training sessions when their schedules permit. This has broadened exposure of school staff to the principles and processes of accelerated schools. After hosting meetings, the level of commitment and enthusiasm seems to improve substantially in the schools.

Third, each of the schools has used the process of hosting the quarterly meetings as an opportunity to gain news media coverage for the school. News people cover meetings and interview out-of-town guests. The resulting newspaper stories and television news spots help create a better image for the school in the community.

4.3.2 Realizing Hidden Strengths

The more indepth that schools get in the taking-stock process, the more they realize hidden strengths. Very often, they discover the causes of school problems can be turned into opportunities for improvement. Indeed, potential "strengths" often seem hidden in the thorniest of school problems, like diamonds in the rough. Several examples of this discovery process were evident in site visit interviews.

In one school, an assistant principal reflected in an interview on what she had learned from the taking-stock process. In one instance, she reflected on the family structure in the school. Most students were black children from single-parent

homes; many lived in projects. She observed that in many of these homes, older siblings had responsibilities for helping to raise their younger siblings. She extrapolated that peer tutoring processes could probably be developed in the school that complemented and built on this informal process. In another instance, she observed that, since the school was extremely large, there was little opportunity for teachers or students to interact across grade levels. After discussing this situation further, and making the link to the potential peer tutoring processes, she realized that they had opportunities in the school to restructure where classes were offered, perhaps having multiple grade levels in the same classroom clusters. This might allow for increased interactions of teachers and students across grade levels, or even for thematic approaches to curriculum that created schools within the school. These observations illustrate a capacity to go beneath the surface of a problem to identify hidden strengths that can be built upon.

Another example of seeing the potential on the other side of a problem seems to be emerging from interviews and discussions with teachers in an inner-city school with a Montessori program for pre-school through third-grade. The teachers in the Montessori program felt isolated -- they had few opportunities to interact with teachers in the regular program -- and their Montessori students often transferred to other schools without matriculating into the regular program. This situation was symptomatic of a deep division in the school. Through interviews

and dialogues, teachers in both the Montessori and regular programs began to realize that the Montessori program was an accelerated model of teaching and learning and that the whole school could benefit from the experience of this isolated group. By the third quarterly meeting, there was evidence of groups of teachers beginning to explore this potential.

In another school,the Accelerated Schools Project was one of several new, innovative, school-wide projects the school was implementing. The teachers were enthusiastic but seemed on the edge of burn out. Based on the interviews and follow-up discussions, it was observed that they could learn a great deal about what might work in transforming the school's curriculum and instructional processes by assessing what they had learned from new reading programs and other innovations currently being tested in the school. There was discussion that an assessment of current activities could help to gain more focus, to begin pulling together, rather than feeling pulled apart, by moving in too many directions at once.

4.3.3 Building Communities of Inquiry

The inquiry process seems integral to the transformation of schools that serve at-risk students. Not only is the process the cornerstone of the accelerated schools methodology, but research on such schools that have made major improvements in their test scores have had teacher-based inquiry at both the school and classroom levels (St. John and Miron, forthcoming). More generally, research on organizational effectiveness suggests that

creating communities of inquiry may help to make long-term gains in organizational effectiveness and to transform dysfunctional patterns in organizations (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1987). From our observations of, and experience with, the start of the accelerated schools process, we hypothesize that there are two essential aspects of meaningful school-based inquiry.

The first is an emerging sense of community by teachers within the school. There is substantial evidence that a sense of community is developing among teachers in several schools in the network. Indeed, a few such examples have already been discussed. In accelerated schools, this sense of community seems closely linked to the process of building unity and gaining experience in instructional leaders (discussed in section 4.1 above).

The second aspect of creating communities of inquiry is the full implementation of the inquiry process in school-based cadres, including the steering cadre. As discussed earlier (section 2.3), there is growing evidence that many school leaders now understand the inquiry process at an espoused level. The dialogue about the inquiry process at the last two quarterly meetings demonstrated a depth of conceptual understanding.

However, there is not yet much evidence of inquiry at an "in use" level in the schools. Of particular concern here is whether there is an orientation toward defining pilot tests, and other school-based experiments, as having disconfirmable hypotheses. Clearly, the potential has been demonstrated. For example, the

"action experiments" described in section 4.2.2, illustrate the potential of stating action hypotheses in ways that can be tested. Unless an organization identifies its experimental hypotheses that are both disconfirmable and publicly tested, it is difficult to transcend the self-sealing logic that is pervasive in schools and most other organizations (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1987). The challenge that remains is to facilitate the design of pilot tests in schools that have disconfirmable hypotheses. This issue merits special consideration and attention.

4.4 On Building Capacity

Research on accelerated schools suggests that schools need to establish an organizational capacity before they can begin to restructure the organization, and that organizational restructuring is a necessary requisite to transforming the focus of pedagogy in the school from an emphasis on remediation to an emphasis on acceleration (Davidson, 1992). This evaluation study of eight schools implementing accelerated schools processes seems to reinforce this prior research finding. Further, this evaluation report concludes that building an organizational capacity to transform is closely linked to the process of practicing the three principles of accelerated schools.

The ability of teachers and administrators to understand the three principles of accelerated schools on a conceptual level usually is nearly immediate, because they are consonant with the way theorists argue that schools should be run. It is even easy

for most school teachers and administrators to espouse a belief in these principles. However, the process of learning to practice the principles of accelerated schools on an "in use" level is more difficult.

There is substantial evidence from this first-year review of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project that leaders in the schools training during the first year of the project have begun to practice the principles of unity, empowerment with responsibility, and building on strengths. The emergent capacity should enable these to continue successfully the school transformation process.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on this review and analysis of the first-year project, it can be concluded that: 1) the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project has successfully delivered the first-year training and services for the eight schools included in the first-year project; 2) the eight schools nearing completion of the first year of the accelerated schools process have successfully completed the three first-year milestones for the project -- taking stock of the school as it is, developing a vision for the school, and identifying challenge areas to guide the restructuring process; and, further, 3) it appears these schools are building organizational capacity to transform to the accelerated model of schooling.

This action-oriented evaluation has focused on identifying ways of strengthening the capacity of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project to facilitate the accelerated schools process. Toward this end, recommendations are made in four areas:

- Fall Training (5.1)
- Technical Assistance (5.2)
- Quarterly Meetings (5.3)
- Peer Training (5.4)
- Building the Network (5.5)
- Facilitating Statewide Action (5.6)

5.1 Fall Training

The are contradictions inherent in the training strategy used to introduce new schools to the accelerated schools process.

Specifically, the fall training process that pulls some members from the school community into an intensive training process creates an inequity in the school -- a disparity in knowledge and experience of a subgroup in the school. Since a principle of the accelerated schools process is to build unity, this disparity is potentially problematic. To overcome this situation, it is necessary for the subgroup receiving the initial training to train the rest of the school in the principles and processes of accelerated schools and to initiate processes that involve the entire school community in the process. These processes -- in-school training and widespread involvement in taking stock -- did, in fact, enable the eight schools to overcome many vestiges of the initial disparity caused by pull out training.

Further, the feedback on the intensive training process was positive, both immediately after the training session and in follow-up interviews and discussions. Therefore, based on the feedback discussed in this review, it is possible to make recommendations for refinements in the fall training process.

5.1.1 First-Year Training

It is recommended that in the fall of 1992 a training program be provided for the six new schools. This training should be three full days and should cover: an introduction to the principles of accelerated schools; an overview of the accelerated schools process; and an indepth introduction to the taking-stock process. Since this will shorten the fall training

and reduce its content, there will be a need for more emphasis on in-service training, possibly as part of the quarterly meetings.

5.1.2 Second-Year Training

There will be an opportunity for second-year fall training for the eight second-year schools, plus Coghill, an experienced accelerated school added to the state network. It is recommended that fall training for the second-year schools: 1) focus at least in part on the pilot-testing phase of the inquiry process, including how to develop disconfirmable hypotheses when pilot testing new school activities; and 2) provide an opportunity for the schools to select additional training topics.

5.2 Technical Assistance

Technical assistance provided by the Accelerated Schools Specialists is a critical element of the Louisiana Accelerated Schools Project. Two specific recommendations are made relative to the continuation of this activity.

5.2.1 Selection Process

The project will add one new full-time Accelerated Schools Specialist. It is recommended that: 1) the new Accelerated Schools Specialist be selected from teachers in schools that have implemented the accelerated schools start-up process; and 2) graduate assistants should have at least some prior exposure to the process as well.

5.2.2 Staff Development

It is recommended that a staff development process be developed to: 1) introduce new Accelerated Schools Specialists

and graduate students to the facilitation process; and 2) facilitate an exchange (an on-going dialogue) about the facilitation process.

5.3 Quarterly Meetings

The quarterly meetings were a vital part of the state project in 1991-92. In order to build on this success, two recommendations are made.

5.3.1 First-Year Schools

Because of the shorter fall training, there will be a need for more lengthy quarterly meetings for first-year schools (possibly two full days, or two and a half days). These meetings should focus on: 1) taking stock (first quarter); 2) developing visions statements (second quarter); and 3) the inquiry process (third and fourth quarters). Instructional leaders of second-year schools should be systematically involved in training for first-year schools.

5.3.2 Second-Year Meetings

It is recommended that the quarterly meetings maintain a dual foci for continuing schools on: 1) sharing the results of the pilot testing process; and 2) facilitating development of topics of concern to leaders in second-year schools.

5.4 Peer Training

Given the combination of recommendations on fall training and training at the quarterly meetings, it has become evident to the project staff that more emphasis needs to be placed on peer training methodologies. As part of the year-end review at the

fourth quarterly meetings, several school representatives commented on the need for more school-based training in the inquiry process. Given the fact that three of the quarterly meetings focused specifically on inquiry, the project team has developed a working hypothesis that more emphasis is needed on follow-up peer training after the quarterly meetings. Informal discussions with school representatives at the fourth quarterly meetings indicate that, in fact, few organized efforts had been made in schools to provide school-based training as a follow up to the quarterly meetings. Therefore, given this deficiency in the design of the training for the quarterly meetings, efforts should be made to incorporate peer training into the design of quarterly training.

5.4.1 First-Year Schools

Time should be allocated at the quarterly meeting for first-year schools to plan for school-based follow-up training. Given the fact that the quarterly meetings will cover taking stock and the inquiry process, it will be important that the new Accelerated Schools Specialist be involved in the planning for, and execution of, summer training and follow-up training on taking stock and inquiry.

5.4.2 Second Year Schools

The second year of the project focuses on cadre-based inquiry. The project team needs to plan for and develop an approach to peer training (or coaching) in the inquiry process.

5.5 Network Building

The communication within the network of accelerated schools is a vital part of the accelerated schools process in Louisiana. Four specific recommendations are made regarding the future of the network.

5.5.1 Facilitating Statewide Dialogue

Efforts should be made during the second year of the project to facilitate the growing dialogue among accelerated schools. At least one statewide meeting should be held. Also, the University of New Orleans should explore means of introducing new elementary schools to the process, possibly on a cost-reimbursement basis. Additionally, a statewide newsletter should be developed.

5.5.2 Middle Schools and Beyond

It is essential that the UNO project team continue to cooperate with the State of Louisiana's parishes and schools on the expansion of the accelerated schools model to middle schools and possibly high schools.

5.6 Facilitating Statewide Action

The University of New Orleans Accelerated Schools Center has collaborated with Stanford University in a design proposal for America 2000. This design proposal uses Louisiana as one of two pilot states for the development of a state-level redesign strategy. Two specific recommendations are made should this project be funded.

5.6.1 State Assessment

The UNO Accelerated Schools team should facilitate an assessment of current state practices if the Stanford America 2000 design proposal is funded. Efforts should be made to establish a working group with representatives from BESE, Louisiana's Accelerated Schools, and the University of New Orleans Accelerated Schools Center. The charge of this working group should include: 1) making recommendations on the assessment strategy; and 2) reviewing the results of the assessment; and 3) making recommendations for the design of a state-level training strategy.

5.6.2 State-Level Training

The widespread implementation of the Accelerated Schools model in Louisiana will involve extensive training of trainers, as well as development of appropriate mechanisms to facilitate widespread implementation. It is recommended that this collaborative working group process be guided by representatives from the UNO Accelerated Schools Center, BESE, and Louisiana Accelerated Schools.

Appendix

LOUISIANA ACCELERATED SCHOOLS PROJECT

Interview Guide for First-Year Review

Background

Name:

Position:

1. How long have you been employed at this school?

   Probes:

   Other positions here?

   Other positions in education?

2. What is your educational background?

   Probes:

   Degrees?

   Majors?

   Areas of certification?

3. Describe your involvement in the Accelerated Schools Process.

   UNO Training

   Taking-stock process

Observations About Taking Stock

Note: Based on the response to question 3, ask the following questions as appropriate.

4. Describe the methods you have used in the taking-stock process.

   Probes:

   Brainstorming?

   Data Collection?

   Organization?

5. What have you learned about teachers?

   Probes:

   Backgrounds?

   Interests?

   Strengths?

   Weaknesses?

   Informal Groups?

6. What have you learned about students' backgrounds?

7. What have you learned about the curriculum?

8. What have you learned about instructional processes?

9. What have you learned about student achievement?

10. What have you learned about student self esteem? and discipline?

11. What have you learned about parents (backgrounds, needs, etc.)?

12. What have you learned about school organization?

    Role of principal?

    Role of teachers?

    Role of parents?

    Role of the community?

    Role of central administration?

13. Other insights about the school gained in the taking-stock process?

Pulling It Together

14. In your view, what are the major strengths of the school?

15. In your view, what are the major challenges facing the school?

16. Has your school developed a vision?

a. If yes, ask them to:

(1) State the vision in their own words.

(2) Describe the process used to develop the vision.

b. If no, ask them to describe their personal vision for the school.

17. What are your wishes and pluses relative to UNO's facilitation and training?

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